

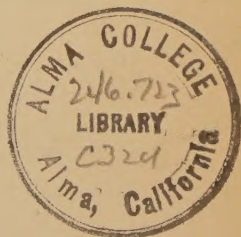
AT THE FEET
OF JESUS

BY

MADAME CECILIA

Religious of St. Andrew's Convent, Streatham

SECOND EDITION



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Dedication.

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE LEAGUE OF THE
SACRED HEART, ESPECIALLY TO THOSE PROMOTERS AND
MEMBERS AMONG WHOM IT HAS BEEN THE
WRITER'S JOY AND PRIVILEGE TO LABOUR FOR MANY YEARS,
THESE SIMPLE CONFERENCES
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHORESS.

COVENTRY HALL, STREATHAM,
September, 1900.

WORKS BY MADAME CECILIA.



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PREFACE.

THESE simple conferences or instructions have been written at the request of the members of the League of the Sacred Heart, among whom it has been the writer's privilege to work. They will recall the Monday meetings in the little oratory of the Confraternity, and the quiet hours spent at the Master's feet. Some of the instructions are necessarily slightly changed in form; new thoughts have been introduced and others omitted, for it is one thing to speak on the spur of the moment, and another to commit thoughts to paper.

The writer's chief aim has been to enable the reader to realise how truly our Lord was made like unto us in all except sin, and to present Him as Master and Model. He knew that hunger, toil, weariness, pain, trials, and death fall to the lot of humanity; therefore, He willed to experience them that He might be our Model and merit for us the grace to make them stepping-stones on the road to Heaven.

Like us, Jesus had joys and sorrows. He rejoiced in spirit when God revealed to the simple what was hidden from the wise and prudent in their own conceit. He wept over Lazarus; He was filled with just anger and zeal when the buyers and sellers profaned the precincts of the Temple.

Among the Apostles, St. John was specially loved by our Divine Master. The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemani reveals clearly that He had no *natural* love of suffering. It was Divine charity that enabled Him to endure the Cross and despise the shame.

If these simple instructions stir up some souls to greater confidence and devotedness in the service of God, they will not have been written in vain.

Each chapter (complete in itself), is followed by a summary which may be found useful by those who desire to use the instructions as meditations. Thus, the book may serve a double purpose ; it will provide both spiritual reading and subjects for meditation. In view of the latter a few hints on meditation are subjoined.

In conclusion, the writer wishes to express her thanks for the kind reception given to her previous book, "*Home Truths for Mary's Children*," a reception which has encouraged her to publish this little volume.

September, 1900.

At the Feet of Jesus.

HINTS ON MEDITATION.

MANY earnest Christians are afraid of meditation. We constantly hear people complain that they cannot meditate. Probably they have never studied any method of mental prayer, and thus they exaggerate the difficulty. Meditation consists in occupying ourselves mentally and prayerfully with some mystery of the Faith. We call to mind the chief facts, ponder over them, and then stir up our will to regulate our conduct in consequence. Hence, meditation is an exercise of the faculties of our soul—memory, understanding, and will. Some persons are also aided by the imagination; to others it is a hindrance. Have you ever received an affront that cut you to the quick? Then, doubtless, you meditated on it for an hour or more. Memory recalled the facts, imagination supplied extra details and false colouring, the intelligence discussed the motives, such as ingratitude, jealousy or pride; it considered the baseness and the unexpectedness of the insult; finally, the will took a

firm resolution to avoid that person or to retaliate. Now what was all this but a meditation in which you employed all the powers of your soul? Moreover, it was probably made without a single distraction, which is of very rare occurrence when we meditate on a mystery of our holy Faith.

Unfortunately, the subject was not well chosen, but at least it may help you to understand that you are capable of making a meditation. Suppose that instead of reflecting on a personal affront, you had chosen for subject the insults received by our Lord at the court of Herod. You pictured out the scene, recalled the facts, pondered them over, weighed the motives, and then stirred up yourself to imitate your Divine Model. This would have been an excellent meditation. Now it is true that the Holy Ghost is the great Master who teaches us how to pray, but this does not dispense us from means which He has placed at our disposal, for "God helps those who help themselves," in this as in temporal enterprises. The masters of the spiritual life have traced out methods of mental prayer for their disciples. The one laid down by St. Ignatius, in his "Spiritual Exercises," is perhaps the best known. It consists of three parts : (1) preparation, (2) meditation proper, (3) exercise of the affections. Each of these parts is sub-divided, and a few words on them may be useful to the reader.

I. *Preparation*.—Read over the subject of the meditation carefully. This can be done either the previous evening or immediately before commencing the meditation. Then place yourself in the presence

of God : stand (if convenient) and reflect on the truth, that God sees into your inmost soul ; kneel and make an act of faith and an act of adoration with all the intensity of your inmost being.

These acts need not occupy more than two minutes. They have for object to prepare you by devout recollection to commune with God.

1st Prelude.—Picture to yourself some scene connected with the mystery which forms the subject of your meditation. This is an exercise of the imagination which you can omit if you do not find it helpful.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for a grace in keeping with the mystery on which you intend to meditate. Thus, if you have chosen the Passion of our Lord, pray for a deep hatred of sin or perfect contrition.

The proximate preparation is now finished, and you need not give more than three or four minutes to it. Now pass on to the second part.

II. *The Meditation.*—Here we consider the subject carefully and devoutly. If you have for subject some maxim of our Lord, think when, where, and why He uttered it. See what lessons you can learn from it, and how far your conduct is at variance with the precept. Take a practical resolution to amend. Determine some *definite act* of the virtue in question. A vague purpose of amendment is useless.

In this part of the meditation avoid spending all the time in reflections, since they are a means not an end. Their great object is to stir up your will to do some good action and to serve as a solid

foundation for your resolutions. The most important part of meditation is the exercise of the affections, and all the preceding steps should lead up to this essential point.

III. *Colloquy*.—This is a direct prayer, so make acts of faith, hope, charity, etc., as they are suggested by the subject of your meditation. This part of the meditation should occupy at least one-fifth of the whole time allotted to the exercise.

Finish by the *Offering of Resolutions*. You can use a set form or your own words. Then, as a reminder of your meditation, choose a *Spiritual Bouquet*, that is some thought which bears on the subject, and which you can recall when tempted to break your resolution. Finish by reciting some vocal prayer, such as the “Our Father” or Anima Christi.

This is a brief exposition of St. Ignatius’ method of meditation ; it may seem complicated at first, but constant use simplifies it. Just a few words of warning in conclusion :

1. Do not expect to succeed the first time you make a meditation ; or, if the novelty of the exercise attracts you, and it seems very easy, do not underrate the difficulties and imagine that you already know how to meditate.

2. When you find sufficient food for reflection and affections in one point, do not be in a hurry to pass on to the next.

3. Remember that there are times of spiritual desolation when mental prayer is very difficult. This is not a reason for neglecting or curtailing your meditation. Try to fix your attention and

say some vocal prayers to obtain the grace you desire ; humble yourself before God. Above all, do not be discouraged ; God asks for your efforts, the success does not depend on you.

4. Take a respectful posture, but not an uncomfortable one, which would cause distractions. It is usual to kneel in the beginning and at the end.

5. You are not obliged to use the thoughts suggested in the colloquies in this book ; those that come to you naturally are far more helpful.

6. In choosing your resolution, base it on some well grounded motive, endeavour to foresee when and how you can put it into practice.

These few hints must suffice, as our space is limited, but those who desire further information on the subject can consult the method of meditation by Père Roothan, S.J., or any other similar work.

PREPARATORY PRAYER.

ACT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

MY GOD, I firmly believe Thou art everywhere present and seest all things. Thou seest my nothingness, my inconstancy, my sinfulness. Thou seest me in all my actions ; Thou seest me in this my meditation. I bow down before Thee and worship Thy Divine Majesty with my whole being. Cleanse my heart from all vain, wicked, and distracting thoughts. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will, that I may pray with reverence, attention, and devotion.

PRAYER.

O GOD, my Lord and my Creator, look graciously on Thy child, the work of Thy hands, and mercifully grant me the help of Thy grace, that all my intentions and acts during this meditation may be directed purely to the service and praise of Thy Divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord.

OFFERING OF THE RESOLUTIONS.

MY GOD, I offer Thee these resolutions: unless Thou deignest to bless them, I cannot be faithful to them. From Thy goodness, then, I hope to obtain this blessing, which I ask of Thee in the name and through the merits of Jesus, my Divine Saviour.

Holy Virgin, Mother of my God, who art also my mother, my good angel, and my holy patron saints, obtain for me the grace to keep these resolutions with perfect fidelity.

ANIMA CHRISTI.

SOUL of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water out of the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me ;
Hide me within Thy wounds ;
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee ;
Defend me from the malignant enemy ;
Call me at the hour of my death,
And bid me come unto Thee,
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
For all eternity. Amen.

SUSCIPE.

TAKE, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty,
my memory, my understanding, and my whole
will. All that I am, all that I have, Thou hast
given me, and I give it back again to Thee, to
be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure.
Give me only Thy love and Thy grace ; with these
I am rich enough.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

ST. MATTHEW, speaking of our Lord's temptation, tells us, "*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil*"; and St. Mark, in his usual graphic style, says, "*The Spirit drove Him out into the desert,*" thus marking the strength of the impulse that directed our Lord's steps to the wilderness east of the Jordan.

Jesus had just received baptism at the hands of St. John the Baptist; God the Father had publicly proclaimed His only-begotten Son; and now the scene changes. He goes forth alone to wrestle with the evil one, and to teach us how to conquer temptation. What a sight for the angels, as they gazed in amazement on the spectacle of the Incarnate Word condescending to enter into the arena with Satan. In wonder, admiration, and adoring homage they waited until the moment when they were allowed to minister to our Lord.

What a marvellous act of humility that He should have deigned to "*have compassion on our infirmities, and to be tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin.*" We do not know whether during the whole of the forty days the devil was permitted to tempt our Lord. St. Mark sums up

the facts in these few words : “ *And He was in the desert forty days and forty nights and was tempted by Satan ; and He was with beasts, and the angels ministered to Him.* ” This Evangelist does not give the circumstances of the temptations. St. Matthew’s account is fuller ; he mentions our Lord’s hunger after forty days, and represents the tempter as coming at the expiration of this time. In any case the temptations specified are typical. They show how the devil appeals to man’s passions, such as ease, independence, wealth, and ambition ; how he ever strives to usurp God’s place in the creature’s heart, and his tactics have been the same through all ages. Why should he change them, since they continue to serve his purpose so well ?

Let us meditate for a few moments on the temptation of Jesus, that we may learn some of the lessons the Master willed to teach us in submitting to such a humiliation. In spirit we see our Lord leaving the Jordan and turning His steps towards the desert. There, for forty days, He holds no communication with man. Deprived of all the necessities of life, without food or shelter, exposed to the burning rays of the sun by day, and the bitter cold by night, He remains there alone ; the wild beasts cross His path ; they do not molest their Creator. His time is spent in prayer for men and for the public mission on which He was to enter. Each of us was remembered by name when in that lonely desert Jesus watched and prayed. God sustained His Divine Son miraculously, but this did not prevent our

Lord feeling the need of food. How truly He has put Himself on a level with us ; the poorest, who lack a crust of bread and so often feel hunger's keen pangs, can unite their sufferings with those of our Saviour in the desert, for He has willed to endure them.

How we should have loved to minister to Him, to have taken Him food ! With what joy would we have provided for His needs. Our God and Master hungered in the desert and we were not there to minister to His wants. If only He were on earth now how willingly would we sacrifice all, that He should lack nothing ! It is not too late ; the poor still hunger, and in supplying their needs we minister to Him. They are Christ's heritage to the Church, His proxies, through whom we can pay the debt of love due to our Saviour. "*I was hungry and ye fed Me.*" How completely He identifies Himself with the poor ! It is in our power to share the labour of love performed by the holy women, and in a sense with more merit, since we have not the compensation of gazing on our Lord's sacred face, but minister to Him veiled under the garb of the poor.

"*And the tempter coming said to Him: 'If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.'*" Notice that Jesus was the Son of God, and consequently He could work a miracle ; but man cannot supply his own wants by miracles, he must trust in Divine Providence. Jesus willed to teach us this when He replied, "*It is written, 'Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.'*"

There is other nourishment than bread needed by man ; the wants of the soul are not supplied by material food, and the comforts of the body are not to be sought to the detriment of the soul.

Our Lord parried the tempter's thrust "*with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" We are too apt to let this sword rust, forgetting that the great way of steeling our hearts against the evil maxims of the world, and to combat the devil, is to store in our minds the counsels and sayings of the inspired authors, and to use them against the enemy.

The devil, foiled in his first attempt, now took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon the pinnacle of the Temple, and said to Him : "*If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down ; for it is written : ' That He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.'*" The tempter here tried another weapon, presumption. Often it had served him in good stead ; countless souls, now in hell, fell through it. To presume on our natural strength, to be independent of God, is a snare which entraps many. Our Lord teaches us how to resist such a temptation. "*It is written, ' Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'*" Again, Jesus uses the sword of the Spirit. He gives the briefest possible answer, and holds no fruitless parley with Satan. Eve argued and fell. In resisting the devil, brevity is a gage of victory for man. Whoever condescends to hold conversation with the enemy of mankind is already conquered.

“Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And said to Him: ‘All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me.’” Again our Lord gives a brief reply from Scripture: *“Begone, Satan, for it is written: ‘The Lord Thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.’”*

This answer alone would be an invulnerable shield against every temptation, for all sin is an infringement of the rights of God. A soul that is deeply imbued with the sense of God's sovereign dominion is clad in armour for the conflict with the devil. Each should have this firm conviction: “I am a creature, God is my Creator. He has a sovereign right to dispose of me and mine.” St. Paul expresses this truth thus: *“Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.”* Here the thought of the Redemption comes to strengthen the principle of our total dependence on God.

Christ has resisted each temptation, parried every thrust of Satan; then, doubtless, the devil brought Him back to the desert, where the conflict had begun, and *“the temptation being ended the devil departed from Him for a time.”*

So it ever is in the Christian life. In the warfare against sin, the devil leaves us *“for a time.”* He will return with another plan of attack, with some disguised form of an old temptation; but whatever be the bait with which he tries to allure us, there is no doubt about his returning to renew the conflict. There can be no truce with the devil. Hostilities cease only when we yield or quit this world.

Satan having left our Lord "*behold angels came and ministered to Him.*" They provided for His bodily wants ; there in the lonely desert they paid supreme homage to the Conqueror. They adored the impenetrable designs of God. We see them surrounding our Lord, forming His court, providing for His needs and serving Him with intense joy, and forming His escort as He returned to the haunts of men and began His public life.

As a calm ever follows a tempest, so joy comes to the Christian who has conquered the temptations of the devil and remained faithful to God. Angels minister to us from the cradle to the grave. As they watched our Lord's conflict in the desert and afterwards ministered to him, so they protect us when we enter the lists against Satan, aiding us by their prayers and rejoicing with us when we come off victorious. What precious lessons we can learn from the Gospel narratives of our Lord's temptations. We have touched on some. Let us notice a few more.

Jesus was led into the desert to be tempted. The wilderness is characterised by solitude : for us it is the world, through which we are journeying homeward to our Heavenly Father ; or our desert may be spiritual desolation, "*in a desert land where there is no way and no water,*" when all looks dark and gloomy, for God seems so far off: yet wherever the Spirit leads we must follow.

God watches over us in the spiritual desert as He did over His Son in the wilderness ; the angels are at hand to assist and minister to us. The Spirit who led our Saviour to be tempted remained

with Him during the conflict : so too the Christian, the temple of the Holy Ghost, is strengthened by the Spirit of God, who knows what is necessary for his sanctification.

Some He "*leads*" into the desert, others He "*drives.*" The inspiration that reveals the will of God may be more or less strong. Often, alas, He has to drive in another sense, for we are cowardly and have not the courage to walk on bravely in the road pointed out by duty. Many a soul is in earnest, and yet dares not face self or solitude, a life-long martyrdom or God at the hour of death. To such, as to St. Peter, our Lord whispers, "*Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.*"

Where is the faithful disciple who has not often been led where he would not have had the courage to go alone? Such a powerful grace is given to a soul in face of some heroic act of detachment : for example, to those who are called to leave all for God and tread the path of the counsels ; such a grace upheld the confessors and martyrs when they suffered for Christ.

Notice, the Evangelist lays stress on the fact that our Lord was led into the desert that He might be tempted. So it is with us. Our life in this desert of earth is one long conflict. Were it otherwise how could we win our crown, and join the white-robed multitude who, having come out of great tribulation, stand before the throne of the Lamb? Temptation does not make us feeble, though it reveals our weakness ; and just as our muscles are strengthened and developed by exercise, so

temptation exercises and calls forth virtues. Many people confuse temptation with sin, but there is a great difference between the two. Sin begins when the will consents, and not before.

It is a consolation to know that in the desert the Master is ever by our side, and that in the wilderness our Lord worked many of His miracles. What shall we find there if we traverse it by the Master's side? Certainly an arena, where we can fortify our soul by spiritual wrestling, and glorify our Master by being faithful to His service.

The knights of old loved to win fame in the lists by conquering their opponents, and in the arena of life the Christian knight does not lack a foe with whom he can measure his strength and skill. Yet even in the desert there are halting-places. Once Jesus bid the disciples go into the desert and rest awhile. How they must have rejoiced to have had the Master all to themselves, to learn from His Divine lips lessons of heavenly wisdom. So our Lord calls us apart in time of retreat or mission to recruit our souls, and store up provisions of spiritual strength for coming struggles.

At other times Jesus healed many in the wilderness, curing all who were brought out to Him. How often has He healed us by the Sacrament of Penance or after a fervent act of contrition. The wise men were led through the desert by a star, which guided them until it led them to the stable at Bethlehem, where "*they found the Child and His Mother.*" Even so faith and obedience are our guiding stars on the pilgrimage of life, and they

will lead us through all perils to the feet of Jesus. On the road doubts and fears may arise ; but God will not leave us thus, He will send a teacher to instruct and guide us, as of old He sent Philip the Deacon to the desert, that he might teach the Ethiopian eunuch the mysteries of the Christian faith.

What dispositions are necessary to guide us through the temptations that must harass us in the journey of life ? Two principally—generosity and fidelity. The former will enable us to press on, expecting difficulties, without fearing pain and fatigue ; and if our generosity be very great, then we shall try to distinguish ourselves in the Master's service, seeking only His glory. Such was the ambition of all the saints, and their progress followed as a matter of course ; for honours in the spiritual life come to those who avoid them, as indeed they often do in this world.

It needs courage to take up our cross day by day, to repulse continually the enemy who never grows weary ; and often smaller crosses are harder to bear by their multitude and continuity than greater trials. Yet we shall struggle on if we are generous, sustained by the love of God.

Fidelity is another disposition that is necessary. It makes us go steadily on in the right path. A faithful servant is not to be won by a bribe from the enemy : so the false glare of the world and the temptations of riches and honour must not tempt us to desert our cause.

One thought in conclusion. We are fighting and struggling under the eyes of our Divine Captain.

He watches every soldier and sees each effort. He ever sends help in time of need, and will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength. Under a Leader who has given us an example, and is foremost in the thick of the fight, who knows what it is to struggle against Satan, how can we do otherwise than follow, falling now and again through human frailty, but rising as often and pursuing our way generously, and profiting by our falls to learn our own weakness and the strength of the enemy? Every effort will have its reward in heaven, and even when we fall, worn out with the struggle, the Master will credit us with the feeble efforts we made to resist. Heaven is perhaps nearer than we think, and the reward is promised to those who fight on bravely to the end. “*To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of my God.*” “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*” So when temptation comes, we will press valiantly on, breathing the prayer to our Divine Captain: “By Thy fasting and temptation, good Lord deliver us. Amen.”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent the devil tempting our Lord in the desert, and listen to our Saviour’s brief replies.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to recognise every temptation, and to resist promptly and generously.

1st Point.—The temptations of Jesus in the

desert were typical, because man is solicited by the same—love of comfort, wealth, and ambition.

2nd Point.—The desert is a place of silence, solitude, and sterility. Desolation is a spiritual desert. The Holy Ghost *leads* or *drives* into the wilderness.

3rd Point.—Temptations are inevitable. In the desert of life the Christian finds an arena, a halting-place, healing, instruction, etc.

Colloquy.—Kneeling in spirit at our Lord's feet, ask Him for grace to resist temptation, never to argue with the devil, and to utilise the "*sword of the Spirit.*" Ask that you may always recognise the tempter's voice. Thank our Lord for the graces He has merited for us by His temptations.

Resolution.—To resist temptation generously and promptly, especially the temptation to [here specify].

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—By Thy fasting and temptation, good Lord deliver us.

Prayers.—Our Father, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST DISCIPLE OF JESUS.

WHAT a beautiful picture the Evangelist St. John gives us of the call of St. Andrew! We seem to see Jesus passing by at a little distance. St. John the Baptist is standing with two of his disciples, to whom he points out our Lord as "*the Lamb of God.*" The two disciples at once follow Jesus, who appears not to notice them for some time, then He turns to them with the simple question, "*What seek you?*" They answered, "*Master, where dwellest Thou?*" and in response to our Lord's invitation, "*Come and see . . . they came and saw where He abode, and stayed with Him that day.*" St. Augustine is of opinion that they also passed the night under our Saviour's roof. "*Andrew, the brother of St. Peter, was one of the two who had heard of Him, and followed Him.*" Each person here mentioned gives us some lessons of virtue, and a few moments spent in meditating on these examples will stir us up to great fervour and generosity in the Master's service.

The first figure that attracts our attention in this vivid picture is St. John the Baptist standing in the foreground on the banks of the Jordan. Of him our Lord said that he was "*More than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold I send*

My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee. ! Amen, I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist. What a testimony from the lips of Him who is the Eternal Truth. All was supernatural in the life of St. John—his birth, his being sanctified in his mother's womb, his mode of life, his power of touching the human heart and winning souls to God, his humility and intrepid courage, which feared not the wrath of a king, and procured him a martyr's crown. In this particular instance we notice his unselfishness and his spirit of detachment. St. John was a master ; he had gathered disciples around him : naturally, he was attached to them, for many had forsaken evil habits and had turned to God through his preaching ; yet he never lost sight of the fact that he was the forerunner, not the master, and constantly he reminded his disciples of this. "*I am not the Christ, He that shall come after me, who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.*" Time passes on and our Lord appears ; instantly St. John bids his disciples follow the Lamb of God. He willingly lets them go, knowing that he is only a worker in God's harvest field, and rejoicing to present his sheaves to the Lord of the harvest.

We test a master's ability by the progress of his pupils, and, judging by this standard, we see how well St. John taught his disciples, for St. Andrew at once followed our Lord and left his former master, who saw him depart without regret. Both give us a touching lesson of detachment. Our hearts are apt to cling to earthly supports, and

even when our love is pure in the beginning, it may degenerate.

How frequently we see an example of this. God gives children to be trained for Him : when their child is born, the parents appear to realise their obligations and mean to fulfil them in earnest. Time passes, the spirit of the world creeps in, the heart gets attached to the creature *for itself rather than for God*, and man only feels the strength of the cords of human affection that bind him when God claims the object of his love. Perhaps it is the reaper Death, who restores a loved child to his Heavenly Father. Then the parents are inconsolable, all the duties of life are neglected, they may even go so far as to cherish bitter feelings against the Creator for claiming His own, and refuse Him the homage they owe. Or God allows that son to grow up, and then calls him to a perfect life. The parents rebel against the will of God, they do all they can to prevent his entering religion or the priesthood. They cannot sacrifice to our Heavenly Father the child He gave them. The same danger exists also for the child, who may love his parents more than God, or a husband may idolise his wife to such an extent that when she is taken his grief at her loss plunges him in a life-long melancholy.

Separations from those we love must always be bitter ; we cannot help feeling intense pain when the cords of love that have joined us for years are snapped asunder ; but in spite of our grief we can *rise above* our sorrow and make our act of resignation with the whole force of a will determined to obey God even when the lower part of our human

nature revolts. Often *time* rather than *virtue* deadens the pain, but our merit would have been greater had we borne our cross more generously.

There are, perhaps, only a few great sacrifices we shall be called to make for God in a lifetime, hence we must not let the opportunity slip of showing our love for Him. He who gives cheerfully gives twice, like him who gives quickly. It was thus St. Andrew left St. John the Baptist. The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. There was no interval between the intimation of their master's will and their obedience. Had they delayed what graces they might have lost. We can see them following our Lord, not daring to approach nearer, until after trying their faith by His silence, He encouraged them by turning to them with the question, "What seek ye?" It was a searching question, but the disciples were prepared for it and could answer frankly, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" Our Lord did not always find His Apostles as ready to answer an interrogation. Once, as they walked along behind Him, they had been disputing as to who should be the greatest. Our Lord turned and asked what they had been speaking about. The Apostles were sadly embarrassed; not one answered. Truly, "conscience doth make cowards of us all." Scripture reveals God's saints to us as they were, it lets us see their frailty and falls, as well as their combats crowned with victory.

How confused we should be sometimes if, in the middle of an action or a day-dream, our Lord

were to appear to us and ask, "*What seek you?*" Often, like the Apostles, we should be too confused to answer. If we spoke, should we not have to own that we were seeking to satisfy our ambition, to gratify some petty revenge, to procure admiration, to triumph over a fellow-creature, to shake off a cross, to avoid a duty or to excuse ourselves?

These and other similar motives so often give the impulse to our actions and direct them in a wrong path, and the mainspring is invariably self in some shape or other. The Apostles had our weaknesses, yet they came to be saints and martyrs, so there is hope for us, provided we have the good will, and it is already a step in the right direction to admit candidly our failings and selfishness. It is not too late to put God in place of self. The more we advance in the spiritual life the less there is of egotism. Thank God that in heaven we shall lose sight at last of self. The disciples' answer must have pleased our Lord: "*Master, where dwellest Thou?*" They owned Him for their Master and sought to know where He dwelt, that henceforth they might follow Him, learn at His feet, and be His disciples. To know the path that leads to where Jesus dwells, and to abide for ever in His society, is our aim if we are earnest Christians. As a means of attaining that end we will seek Him in His earthly homes, in the tabernacle, in the poor, in all who claim our love and obedience for His sake. Those who seek our Lord in earnest are never left long in doubt. How can it be otherwise? How can God refuse to hear and answer the prayer which the Holy

Spirit has inspired? "*Seek and ye shall find*" remains eternally true.

Thus our Saviour answered the disciples' question by an invitation. "*He saith unto them, come and see.*" "*They came and saw where He abode and stayed with Him that day.*" The invitation "Come" is ever falling from the lips of Jesus; the sinners, the sorrowful are always welcome. It is the word which we hope to hear at the last day, for it will decide our eternal happiness. The disciples received more than they had asked for; our Lord did not merely tell them where He dwelt, but invited them to accompany Him. We do not know where He led them, but we love to think of them walking along the road with Him, listening to His words, asking Him questions, and hanging on the words of the Incarnate Son of God. What a wondrous charm there must have been in our Lord's words and person that drew all hearts to Him. On they went, until they reached the house which Jesus honoured by dwelling therein. They entered and stayed with Him that day. May we not feel assured that He provided them with a meal? perhaps He waited on them and ministered to their wants with His Divine hands. It may be that they saw our Lady, for she was sometimes near our Lord during His public life, which was then only just beginning.

If the Psalmist in the fulness of joy could say, "*For better is one day in Thy court, above thousands,*" what must have been the happiness of the two disciples who "*stayed with Him that day.*" A day with Jesus; we, too, have had our days with

Him, when we have been in sorrow, or perhaps during a fervent retreat or ministering to His poor and afflicted. Why should not *all* our days be spent with Him by interior recollection since He dwells in our hearts ; by purity of intention and a life of daily self-denial ? In the path of self-sacrifice we shall always be in our Lord's company, and the most generous are those who are nearest to Him. We see the fruits of St. Andrew's visit to the home of Jesus, "*He findeth first his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messias,' and he brought him to Jesus.*" From the Sacred Heart the disciple had learned a lesson of zeal, the fruit of Divine love which the knowledge of our Lord had kindled in his heart. Love, like a fire, must spread its influence around. The very contact with a practical, earnest Christian is an incentive to holiness, and even those who have not the courage to imitate his virtues, at least respect them.

St. Andrew, full of the love of God, longed to bring others to our Lord, and "*he findeth first his brother.*" He began his apostleship in the right place—at home. Too often we find people who have a certain zeal for God which is ill regulated. They will rush off in a fever of excitement to help strangers ; they are prodigal of their time and devotedness out of doors, while they refuse to perform the common duties of home. It is good to succour our neighbour, but we must remember that our parents and relations have the first claim on our charity. In the zeal, which displays itself only out of doors, there is something suspicious,

something that savours of self or ostentation, to say the least. We must let our light shine before men, and those with whom we live must first perceive its rays. The same principle applies also to the congregation and parish to which we belong. Many will give their aid to some popular work that is fashionable, and furnishes them with a certain excitement and applause, while they refuse to support parochial works. True, these may not be so congenial, but even in our choice of good works there must be some sacrifice. St. Andrew brought Simon to our Lord. Whom have we brought or tried to bring? If we are zealous we shall always find an outlet for devoting ourselves; love makes us ingenious, and with small means we can do much for God.

Simon Peter was brought to Jesus, who, looking on him, said: "*Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter.*" Thus Simon, who came to Jesus after Andrew, was chosen in a special way by the Divine Master and placed before his brother. His name was changed; henceforth he was to be Peter, which signifies a rock; his future office was foreshadowed, and Andrew was not jealous. Like St. John the Baptist he could say, "*He that is come after me is preferred before me*"; the lesson had been well taught and the disciple put it in practice. Sometimes those whom we have brought to the Church or to co-operate in some good work are preferred before us. If we are humble and unselfish, we shall rejoice that their talents are utilised for God. It is a great privilege

to be the means of putting others in a position to do good for which, perhaps, we have not the necessary qualifications nor the candour to admit our incapacity. St. Andrew was faithful to the first grace, he became our Lord's disciple ; then came the second call, when the first four disciples were promoted to be Apostles and privileged to leave all for Christ. What a glorious mission ! How St. Andrew, who had begun so early to bring souls to God, must have rejoiced when Jesus made him and his companions "*fishers of men.*" Henceforth all his life was for the Master only. Scripture does not tell us much about his subsequent career. We find him taking compassion on the multitude, who followed our Lord into the desert, for when Jesus asked, "*Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ?*" Andrew replied, "*There is a lad here that hath five barley loaves and two small fishes ; but what are these among so many ?*" After this he is only mentioned when the other Apostles are named. With them he went on an apostolic mission and shared in the miraculous gifts granted to them. His love of God and zeal for souls ever increased until, in the narrative known as "*The Acts of St. Andrew,*" we find it urging him on to the martyrdom of the Cross. Like his Master, he longed for the hour when he should be permitted to give the greatest proof of love, by dying like Jesus on a cross of ignominy. His wish was granted ; and when he saw the cross on which he was to suffer, he knelt and saluted it afar off : "*O cross, so ardently desired, receive in thy arms the disciple of Him*

who died on thee." The cross was his treasure, because by it he could resemble his Divine model. It was also his pulpit, whence he preached and converted many during the three days he hung upon it. The Christians would have released him by force, but he begged them not to snatch the palm of martyrdom from him ; and so the lover and Apostle of Jesus expired, leaving us heroic examples of attachment, zeal, and love of God in its noblest form—that of love of suffering, which unites the soul so closely to its crucified Saviour.

We all have our cross laid upon us by God. How do we bear it? If we support our trials with submission to God's will, it is already a step in the right road ; but if we want to be Apostles, to do good in the world, we must try to go farther and accept our crosses joyfully as a means of uniting us more closely to our Lord. In this light they lose much of their terror, and if we have not the strength to go so far in greater difficulties, we will at least try to suffer without repining. Love lightens the sorrows of life ; and if St. Andrew loved the Cross so passionately, it was not for itself, for, like us, he was human, and had a natural repugnance for suffering, but he longed for it as a means of union with Christ. We know how cowardly we are, how we shrink from pain in any form ; at least let us humble ourselves when we contemplate the virtues of the saints, and rejoice that there have been and still exist fervent Christians who serve the Divine Master a thousand times better than we do, and

thus help to atone for our indifference. As a practical resolution, we will strive to accept the daily pin-pricks of life ; thus we may hope to advance in the spiritual life, and who knows how far in the path of virtue, Jesus may lead us, if only we are faithful? A brave soldier longs to distinguish himself “at the front” ; shall we, the soldiers of Christ, be content to bring up the rear? Zeal will follow love as its perfect fruit, and, like St. Andrew, we shall become “*fishers of men.*” When shall we begin? To-day, since to-morrow may never be ours.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent St. John the Baptist pointing out our Lord to St. Andrew and his companion. See how promptly they follow the Divine Master.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to imitate the obedience, charity, zeal, and detachment of St. Andrew.

1st Point.—Jesus bears witness to the greatness of St. John the Baptist. The forerunner led a life of prayer and mortification in the desert. He gives us an example of humility, courage, and unselfishness.

2nd Point.—St. Andrew and his companion left their master and followed Jesus, who said to them, “*What seek ye?*” They replied, “*Master, where dwellest Thou?*” He then invited them to come and see Him.

3rd Point.—St. Andrew found Simon and led him to Jesus, who changed Simon's name to Peter. Both became Apostles and martyrs.

Colloquy.—Ask to profit by the lessons which the saints of God teach you. Beg of Jesus to show you the virtue you most need, and to give you the courage to practise it. Offer to God any sacrifice for which you feel He is asking you.

Resolution.—To accept the daily crosses with resignation, if possible with joy ; or, to strive to be an apostle in your home.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—"What seek ye?"

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST OUR MASTER (ST. PETER).

OF all our Lord's Apostles, St. Peter is the one who stands out most prominently in the holy Gospels. This is due to two causes. First, he was a man of strong passions, foremost by his ardour and impetuosity, full of love for his Divine Master, and devoted to His interests. Secondly, he was chosen by Christ to be the foundation stone and head of the Church.

In the second year of our Lord's public life Simon confessed his faith in the divinity of Christ, and it was then that our Lord revealed to him his sublime vocation. For that glorious mission a preparation was needed, which our Saviour Himself undertook. St. Peter was docile, his will ever ran parallel with that of his Divine Master, and, in spite of frequent failures, the Apostle profited by Christ's lessons. The whole life of the head of the Apostolic College reveals the tender loving care of Jesus for His own. Little by little St. Peter was led on in the path of holiness. He is mentioned in the Gospels for the first time when Andrew, his brother, "*findeth first his brother Simon, and saith to him, 'We have found the Messias,' which being interpreted is the Christ; and he brought him to Jesus.*" Andrew had just made our Saviour's

acquaintance, and already he was zealously striving to recruit disciples for his Divine Master.

Little thinking what a sublime vocation was reserved for him, Simon stood before Jesus and gazed on the sweet features of our beloved Saviour, while the holiness that radiated from His sacred Person captivated the loving, ardent soul of the new disciple. "*Jesus looking upon him said : 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jona ; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter.'*" This was the prelude to Simon's vocation, but he understood not as yet the noble mission that awaited him.

So now our Lord calls souls to religious life or to the priesthood : gradually He draws them nearer to Himself and reveals His sacred will. Happy are they who, like Simon, respond to the first invitation of Christ.

Peter was a disciple only. As yet he was not called to give up all ; but when a little later Christ began to gather around Him the chosen band of Apostles, St Peter was one of the first four. The Gospel narrative tells us : "*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers ; and He saith to them, 'Come ye after Me and I will make you to be fishers of men ;' and they, immediately leaving their nets, followed Him.*" Henceforth St. Peter's name headed the list of Apostles, and he was privileged with James and John to witness the Transfiguration, and the Agony of Christ in the garden. In the hour of the Master's Passion,

human weakness and fear triumphed over the love of the Apostle, and St. Peter denied Christ. Bitterly he sorrowed over his sad fall, and shed tears of repentance until the last day of his life. After the Resurrection Jesus deigned to appear to St. Peter, and to send him a special message. Henceforth St. Peter became one of the chosen witnesses to the truths of Christianity, and finally won the crown of martyrdom, thus proving his love for the Master whom he had once denied. A brief view of St. Peter's life as revealed in the Gospels will afford us practical lessons in virtue and teach us to know our Master better. We shall see how Jesus trained His chosen band, how He watched over those who had left all for His sake. The Apostles were oftentimes far from intelligent, but their Divine Master, ever patient, constantly repeated the same truths until they had grasped them.

One of the earliest lessons our Lord taught His disciples was that of prayer, and He did so in answer to their petition, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" They felt their need of this divine science without which it is impossible to practise virtue. In answer to their request Jesus taught them the "Our Father," as a perfect model of all prayer. It was not only for the Apostles, but for all who in the course of ages should bear the name of Christian. This universal prayer, which includes all those acts of religion that a man owes to God, was the first we learnt at a mother's knee, and thousands of times we have repeated it.

The earnest cry of all Christians should be,

“ Lord, teach us to pray, for we know not what to pray for as we ought,” and we may feel assured that He who inspires the prayer will hear and answer it. This lesson comes first in the training of the Apostles, because prayer is the alphabet of the spiritual life, and one of the chief means of our salvation. None who pray earnestly fail to reach the goal of eternal happiness. The Apostles learnt this first lesson, and the Divine Teacher was able to give them further instructions in the practice of virtue. This time it was indeed a difficult subject to master, the forgiveness of injuries. This lesson was provoked by a question from St. Peter : “ *Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?* ” Jesus saith to him “ *I say not to thee till seven times, but till seventy times seven times.* ” The truth was clearly put before them and enforced by the practical example of the parable of the unforgiving servant ; and our Lord, having spoken of the punishment of this servant, added this solemn warning : “ *So shall My Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.* ” The forgiveness of injuries is indeed “ *a hard saying* ” for poor human nature, which is so inclined to resent and revenge a wrong. How strangely Christ’s words must have fallen on the ears of the Apostles. From childhood they had heard such a contrary doctrine. “ An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” had been the substance of their previous instructions — from the Sadducees. Our Divine Teacher lays down His law of love, so utterly opposed to anything that man could conceive. This

precept of forgiveness is difficult to practise, and involves constant efforts against self. Yet it binds all, and to us, at least, it is no new doctrine. The question is, how do we practise it? Certainly, even the best must admit that a wide gulf exists between theory and practice. Should this discourage us? No, the Apostles themselves learnt their lesson with difficulty, but at least each one knew it when the moment of his martyrdom arrived; and we, like them, shall be saints if we master it perfectly before the hour of death. Meanwhile we will struggle on and do our best to forgive and forget. Christ, our Teacher, pitying our weakness, will have compassion on our fallen human nature, and will bless our feeble efforts.

Another scene in the life of St. Peter arrests our attention; now the subject of Christ's teaching is faith in God.

It was the fourth watch of the night; Jesus approached the bark, which "*was tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary.*" The Apostles at first thought they saw an apparition, and cried out for fear. Jesus reassured them, saying, "*It is I, fear you not.*" Peter, ever the first to reply, said, "*Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters.*" The Master answered, "*Come,*" and instantly Peter accepted the invitation and walked towards our Lord on the billows. Presently he began to sink. Was the Saviour's arm shortened that He could not save? No, the holy Gospel gives the reason of St. Peter's fear: "*Seeing the wind strong, he was afraid, and cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me.'*" It was the occasion our

Lord had foreseen for teaching St. Peter another lesson: "*O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*" Constantly our Lord had to repeat this divine lesson of confidence in God. This time all the Apostles profited by it; as soon as they reached the ship "*they that were in the boat came and adored Him, saying, 'Indeed, Thou art the Son of God.'*" Faith, like all other virtues, must be strengthened by constant practice. We believe firmly that God loves us, and that He is omnipotent; yet, like St. Peter, we doubt when we look at the difficulties that surround us. If we are in the path of duty, having undertaken a work in obedience to the command of God, we need not fear the final result. He who invites can and will give us the strength to obey, and our faith will be fully rewarded. Like St. Peter, doubtless we shall merit many a rebuke for our distrust; but our Lord is too experienced a teacher to expect us to know a lesson after *one* attempt to learn it.

This miracle of the stilling of the tempest teaches us also how Christ ever watched over His disciples. They were in the midst of a storm. Darkness added its terrors to the situation, and, above all, Jesus was not with them in the boat. The danger was imminent; it is not astonishing that they feared. But their Master knew all, and interrupting His prayer, hurried to their assistance, even working a miracle that He might reach them more quickly. We too have our hours of trial; when difficulties and dangers beset us and there seems no way of escape. Courage and confidence are necessary to enable us to persevere; but we may

be sure that He who walked on the waters to aid and console the Apostles will not allow us to perish. If we doubt or distrust His infinite love we too merit the reproach, "*O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*"

As the time of the Passion drew near Christ gradually prepared His Apostles for this trial of their faith by prophesying each detail of it. Like the doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries, it was a "*hard saying*," and Peter, ever foremost in expressing what he felt, began to rebuke his Divine Master, saying, "*Lord, be it far from Thee; this shall not be unto Thee.*" *Who, turning, said to Peter; "Go behind me, Satan, because thou savourest not the things, that are of God, but the things that are of men."* Then our Lord went on to instruct the Apostles concerning the necessity of self-denial, enforcing it by the solemn question, "*What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*" For all, this lesson is difficult, even when we have our Saviour on the Cross as our pattern; but it must have been far more unintelligible to those, who had not, as yet, witnessed the sufferings and death of Christ. This doctrine of self-denial, poverty, and suffering ran counter to their preconceived notions of the Messiah, whom they expected to come with the pomp and majesty of an earthly monarch. Peter must have felt our Lord's rebuke keenly, for he loved his Divine Master, and that very love was the motive which urged him to dissuade our Lord from suffering the torments of the Cross. Little by little the disciple grasped the doctrine of

self-denial, which was so repugnant to his nature and prejudices. Fifteen years later, writing to the Christians of Asia Minor, he echoes the divine precept concerning self-renunciation when he says, "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.*" The science of the Cross is so opposed to our human nature that nothing short of supernatural aid, can enable us to fathom the mystery. The world esteems this science as a folly and scoffs at those who practise it. People who can appreciate devotedness to the sick and poor, or any good work for the benefit of mankind, and who can admire real piety, will decry self-discipline and mortification. It will always be so, for only Christ's disciples, to whom He has revealed the true joy of walking in His footsteps, can accept this doctrine.

Ever watchful over those whom the Father had given Him, Jesus foresees a danger that threatens St. Peter. The Apostle, like the rest of mankind, had the defects of his own good qualities ; his independence of character and ardent zeal led him to presumption. The great enemy of souls was laying a snare for St. Peter, and Jesus, mindful of those whom the Father had given Him, and that He might lose none, warned His Apostle of the coming danger. Jesus was sitting at the table with the Apostles, to whom He had just given His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, and having strengthened them for the trial that awaited them, He proceeded to announce His departure, and those who had been the faithful companions of our Saviour for three years, heard these unusual words, "*Whither*

I go you cannot come." Peter inquired, "*Lord, whither goest Thou?*" Jesus answered, "*Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow hereafter."*

Peter saith to Him: "*Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thee."*

Jesus answered him: "*Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen; I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny Me thrice."*

Meanwhile, the other disciples were occupied discussing "*which of them should seem to be the greater.*" Our Saviour having silenced them, again turned to St. Peter with a final warning: "*Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren. Who said to Him: 'Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.' And He said: 'I say to thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, till thou thrice deniest that thou knowest Me.'*"

Jesus seems to have repeated this warning as they went to the Mount of Olives. Peter had been warned, but only by bitter experience, could he be convinced of the truth of our Lord's words. We are all familiar with the story of the denial, how Simon, so far from following Jesus to prison and to death, denied his Master with cursing and swearing. What a lesson of human frailty we learn here. The Apostle loved his Master, yet he denied Him. Presumption, neglect of prayer and watchfulness led to his fall, as they have so often led to ours. How did our Saviour treat His faith-

less disciple? “*The Lord, turning, looked on Peter.*” That divine look went to the heart of St. Peter, who went out immediately and wept bitterly. A sin of a moment, was expiated by a lifelong contrition. Instantly the penitent Apostle fled from the occasions of sin. A tradition tells us that he afterwards sought out our Lady, and revealed his fault to her, and that she encouraged him to hope for pardon from her Divine Son. Sadly enough Holy Saturday must have passed for St. Peter, but on Easter Sunday, Jesus rose and appeared to Mary Magdalen, through whom He sent a special message to Peter, and the same day He appeared to him. What passed at that interview? We can imagine the Apostle kneeling at our Lord’s feet and confessing his sins with bitter tears. Doubtless Jesus reminded him gently of the warnings which he had received, assured him of forgiveness, and bade him learn from his own experience to treat gently those who fall. How we should have liked to have seen Judas with St. Peter at our Lord’s feet. Alas! the traitor had already gone “*to his own place.*” Such is the difference between contrition and remorse, the forerunner of despair. Peter learnt the lesson of patient forbearance, and, when writing to the early Christians, exhorts them to have “*compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble.*” Notice, the virtues he recommends were just those the most opposed to his own natural defects, and the exhortation has the more weight when we remember that the Apostle, like his Master, began “*to do and to teach.*”

St. Peter had an opportunity of repairing his triple denial by a triple protestation of love ; but how humbly he answers when Jesus asks, "*Simon son of Jona, lovest thou me more than these?*" Before his fall he would have eagerly answered in the affirmative. Now he distrusts himself and replies modestly, "*Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.*" Jesus then confirmed St. Peter in his office as head of the Church, bidding him feed the lambs and sheep of the fold. Thus we see how our Saviour warns His own of coming danger and receives them after a fall. There are many other beautiful lessons to be learnt from the life of the Prince of the Apostles, but these must suffice for the present.

As we kneel at the feet of Jesus, our Master, let us ask which lessons we have most need to learn. Wherein do we most falter when called to practise what we are supposed to have learnt?

From Christ's lessons to His vicar we have seen how we should pray, how to forgive injuries and to comfort others in sorrow. We have seen that true love can be firm to rebuke those in error, and give a needed warning.

Let us profit by the lessons our Divine Master gives us. Crosses, falls, joys, exterior events come laden with instruction for the soul that can by faith see God's hand in all things, and the prayer of a sincere Catholic should ever be, "Teach me to do Thy will, O God, and strengthen me to fulfil it perfectly."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent our Lord teaching His Apostles the “*Our Father*,” in answer to their petition, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*”

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to realise more fully the wondrous love of Jesus for His own.

1st Point.—Jesus taught His Apostles how to pray. He gave them the “*Our Father.*” He instructed them concerning the forgiveness of injuries.

2nd Point.—Jesus rebuked their want of faith and succoured them in danger. He foretold His Passion. It was a “*hard saying*” to them.

3rd Point.—The Master foretold the denial of St. Peter, and comforted and consoled him after the Resurrection.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for deigning to be your Master. Ask for grace to profit by His Divine lessons. Make an act of contrition for past faults. Promise to amend. Ask the assistance of the grace of God.

Resolution.—Watch over your besetting sin to-day.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*You call me Lord and Master.*”

Prayers.—Our Father, Anima Christi.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

THE words "*at the feet of Jesus*" bring to our minds the image of St. Mary Magdalen, whom God, in His infinite mercy, seems to have given to humanity as the great type of penitent love. Thousands have been encouraged to turn from sin and begin a new life by her example ; and doubtless it is so powerful, because the Gospel first shows her to us in all her weakness and degradation. From the depths of sin she rose to the heights of sanctity. Some of God's saints, like St. Aloysius Gonzaga, have been privileged from childhood. They seem to have been exempt from the frailties common to man ; and as we read their lives we cannot help feeling that such saints are destined to glorify God's power and goodness rather than to encourage sinners. But St. Mary Magdalen is shown as a fallen child of Adam. If we accept the tradition which identifies the sinful woman (whom our Lord pardoned in the house of Simon the leper) with St. Mary Magdalen, as many of the Fathers of the Church, especially St. Gregory the Great, have done, then we see her for the first time in the Pharisee's house. The Church seems

to endorse this opinion by her choice of this narrative for the Gospel of St. Mary Magdalen's Feast. She comes before us as a notorious sinner, out of whom our Lord cast seven devils, and to whom many sins had been forgiven. She repents sincerely, and from a penitent becomes a saint, a witness and an apostle full of zeal for her Divine Master. From Mary the sinner we are led to contemplate Mary Magdalen the saint, full of the love of Jesus. Let us study the different phases of her life ; it will give us confidence in the struggle against our evil passions and reveal the infinite love of our Heavenly Father.

As we meditate on the character of St. Mary Magdalen, we see a rich, ardent nature, capable of loving passionately and with an intense desire of affection. Moreover, tradition represents her as beautiful and wealthy. Love and hatred are the two great passions that exist in the soul of every human being. God has implanted them, and in themselves they are neutral. All depends on the object which is chosen. If our love have God for its object, then it will make saints of us. If, on the contrary, our affections cling inordinately to creatures, they will lead us to eternal ruin. St. Mary Magdalen, before her conversion, was ruled by this passion ; she sought happiness in pouring the treasures of her affection on creatures. Wealth and beauty procured pleasure and admiration, to which we feel certain she was not insensible. When once the soul breaks with God, there is no degradation to which it is incapable of sinking ; so we see Mary Magdalen plunged in sin, living

only for this world, abusing the precious gifts of God, and prostituting, to the service of sin, health, time, and wealth ; all the energies of her soul were devoted to creatures. Lazarus and Martha grieved over their erring sister ; they expostulated with her, but all their efforts failed to convert Mary Magdalen. Onward she went in her wild career of pleasure, worldliness, and sin, striving to satisfy the hunger of her soul with the husks of human love. The finger of scorn pointed her out as "*the sinner*;" the self-righteous Pharisee would not deign to speak to her : but severity had no power to win a soul whose mainspring was love. Deeper and deeper she fell into the abyss of sinful pleasures, until honour and shame were alike lost. While she was living thus in the utmost degradation, the twelve Apostles were sent on their first mission. To all, our Lord gave miraculous powers, and Judas, like the rest, was preaching and working miracles, envied and admired by crowds. Who would not, at that time, have preferred to be in the place of Judas rather than in that of Mary Magdalen ? A little more than two years later, Mary Magdalen was the model of true penitents and one of the first witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection, while Judas died the death of a traitor and "*went to his own place.*" Already the canker of covetousness had corrupted his soul, when he murmured at her and accused her of wasting precious ointment on our Lord. How could he, with his greed of gold, understand the generous nature of Magdalen, who loved much, because many sins had been forgiven her ? Truly we may call no man happy until he

dies, for only those who persevere to the end are saved.

The day dawned at last when, for the first time, Mary Magdalen came in contact with the Good Shepherd ; for the first time she gazed on His Divine features, and heard the words of tenderness and love that fell from His lips. They penetrated her inmost soul. He who spoke, as never man spoke, revealed to her the folly of her conduct. His loving, compassionate words touched her heart, causing tears of repentance to flow. When and where she first saw and heard our Saviour, we do not know. Was she present when He uttered the loving invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you?" Or, like St. Peter, was it the mere look of Jesus that changed her heart? Evidently she must have heard or seen Him before the day when she anointed His feet in the house of the Pharisee. Perhaps the report of the resurrection of the widow's son at Nain had reached as far as Bethania, and curiosity may have prompted her to hear Him whose voice could raise the dead. We know for certain that Mary came behind our Lord, as He reclined at table, and there, wept bitter tears of repentance, and, having anointed the feet of Jesus with costly perfume, wiped them with her hair. Notice, how complete was the conversion of this penitent. She came publicly to our Lord, braving human respect and the taunts with which the bystanders must have greeted her. Costly ointment, hitherto lavished on herself, was poured on the Master's feet. Her beautiful hair, the cause of

so many sins of vanity, was now used to wipe His sacred feet. How thoroughly such conduct is in keeping with what we know of St. Mary Magdalen. Her public profession of faith and repentance was the first step on the path of holiness ; and it was a noble beginning, for Mary could not do things by halves. Like all ardent passionate natures, she must be in the van of the cause to which she adhered. At once and for ever she gave up the occasions of sin and followed our Lord bravely, constantly, and generously, even to Calvary. Henceforth we find her with the holy women "*who ministered to Him of their substance,*" consecrating her time, wealth, and influence to His service. She, who had been accustomed to a life of comfort and luxury, now walked on the royal road of privation and suffering as the disciple of the "*Man of Sorrows.*"

We can imagine Jesus confiding her to the loving care of the Blessed Virgin. We know they knew each other, for our heavenly Mother visited Martha and Mary at Bethania, and when our Lord was crucified, Mary Magdalen stood with her at the foot of the Cross. What a contrast: our Immaculate Mother and Mary, the penitent, united by the bond of their deep love for Jesus. How our Lady must have helped Mary Magdalen to persevere, and what wondrous things she could reveal concerning her Divine Son. The mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart ; each esteemed Jesus her only treasure, hence they spoke constantly of Him. "*And the Lord gave ear and heard it ; and a book of remembrance was written*

before Him for them that fear the Lord and think on His name. 'And they shall be my special possession,' saith the Lord of Hosts."

Our dear Mother, from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, had been the "*special possession*" of the Most High; Mary Magdalen, by her love, was rendered worthy to be one of the brightest jewels in the Saviour's crown. Trained by our Lady, impelled by burning love and deep humility, the penitent is ever to be found at the feet of Jesus, where she had obtained pardon. When He visited Bethania, Mary, "*sitting at the Lord's feet, heard His word.*" On Mount Calvary she took her accustomed place; on Easter morn, when Jesus appeared to her and called her by name, her first impulse was to throw herself at His feet. With all the generosity of ardent love, Mary Magdalen became the witness and apostle of Jesus. From the moment of her conversion she never left the Master's service. Holy souls have believed that she received Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday in a chamber adjoining the Cenacle. Throughout the bitter Passion of our Lord, Mary Magdalen was the faithful companion of our Lady. With the Mother of Sorrows and St. John, she stood at the feet of Jesus, during those three long hours, sharing the ignominies that were heaped on her beloved Master. Who can fathom the depth of her repentance when she witnessed the torments of His Passion? Then she must have realised as she had never done before the exceeding "*sinfulness of sin.*" The end came at last, Jesus uttered a piercing cry as His spirit

went forth to God. Two hours longer they remained there, watching by His sacred body. Then the centurion came, Jesus was detached from the Cross, and Mary Magdalen helped our Lady to shroud the lifeless body. They took Him to the sepulchre hewn out of a rock, and we can picture Mary kneeling once more at His feet, bathing them with her tears. The stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre and the seal placed on it, then the band of faithful disciples returned with our Lady to Jerusalem.

Mary Magdalen's next care was to prepare the spices with which to embalm the body of Jesus ; for, like the Apostles, she had forgotten our Lord's prophecies about His Resurrection. Only the "Virgin most faithful" believed that He would rise again. The Sabbath was over and the morning of the third day dawned. Mary Magdalen, in company with the holy women, set out for the sepulchre. On the road, they raise the question, "*Who shall roll away the stone?*" but, firm in their confidence in God, this difficulty does not prevent their going forward. Yes, when God sends us on an errand of love, He ever rolls away the stone. How often have we experienced this? There in the garden Mary was standing alone ; she had found the sepulchre empty ; while the other holy women returned to announce the news, Mary Magdalen remained near the grave, seeking the dead body of Jesus. Presently He appeared, though she did not recognise Him until He called her by name, "Mary." "Rabboni !" was the cry that issued from her lips and heart. He was there,

her God and Saviour, to whom she owed all. She would fain have embraced His sacred feet and pressed her lips to His sacred wounds, but it was not the moment for contemplation. She was to be a witness of the Resurrection, and her mission was to tell the Apostles that Christ had risen : therefore, "*Jesus saith to her, 'Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, and to my God and your God.'*" True, her message was not believed at first; but this did not diminish her merit. Thus the first apparition of Jesus recorded in Scripture was to Mary Magdalen, thus was her love and fidelity rewarded.

During the forty days that elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, she saw our Lord frequently, and doubtless, was with the Apostles on the mountain when a cloud received Him out of their sight. Then came the solemn preparation for the coming of the Holy Ghost, when the Apostles and holy women "*persevered in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.*" Thus strengthened, Mary Magdalen now retired into solitude, and led a severe life of penance, which only ended when God called her to contemplate eternally, Him at whose feet she had so often knelt on earth. There she now is pleading for all who are far from God, and joining in the praises of the white-robed throng, "*who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb, . . . and God shall wipe away all*

tears from their eyes." Truly, blessed is she for having mourned her sins on earth; now she is comforted for all eternity. In the realms of everlasting happiness we may hope to see her, if only we profit by the graces God showers on us.

What consoling lessons we may learn from the life of this heroic penitent. Let us enumerate a few. The first that strikes us is the necessity of detaching our hearts from earthly affections, as we value the purity of our immortal souls. When once inordinate love is given to a creature, God is dethroned, His homage and worship are given to a human idol. You may object, "Have not our neighbours a right to our affection?" Yes, to *their* share, and no more. "*Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" Do you feel that any human being disputes possession of your soul with God? Have you an inordinate craving to caress and be caressed, so that your memory dwells with intense delight on a word, a glance, the most trifling token of affection from one you love; while, on the other hand, the simplest mark of coldness or indifference drives you almost to despair. If so, beware; restrain these exterior demonstrations, if you would extinguish the inward flame. Just as a current of air causes a fire to burn up brightly, so these lavish marks of endearment feed the passion of love, and conflagration begins when, for the love of a creature, sin is committed. Most of God's saints had strong passions; they did not crush them, but turned them in the right direction, and loved God above all things, and their neighbour for

His sake ; but when once love for one person rules a heart, it plays the part of a tyrant, and jealously excludes not only the Creator, but also the rest of mankind. Wealth and beauty were accessory to Mary Magdalen's sins ; and how many thousands since have they ruined ? The rich man who is mentioned in the Gospels is only one out of a multitude. In spite of this fact, how many Christians repine when wealth is denied or takes to itself wings ! How often a mother glories in the beauty of her children, and trains them to be vain and worldly, while the one who is less endowed by nature has a smaller share of her love ! Experience teaches us what dangerous gifts these are, and if we are wise we shall accept contentedly an inferior position in life, and that share of natural and intellectual gifts which God sees fit to grant. Wealth and natural gifts bring admiration, and few can stand on this pinnacle without becoming giddy. Rightly employed, they procure us an eternal reward ; and the great science of holiness consists largely in knowing *how* and *when* to deprive ourselves of them.

Mary Magdalen, when once converted, gave herself to God in earnest ; she braved human respect, and nobly atoned for the past. All her love was now for Jesus. Are we ashamed of our colours ? Do we hide or apologise for our faith ? Let us learn a lesson from our saint to be brave, and follow our Divine Master, even along the road to Calvary, amidst the scoffing jeers of the crowd. Perhaps, reader, you are grieving over one who has strayed far from the fold—for one who is the cross

of the family. Pray and hope on. Mary Magdalen lived for years in sin, but after her conversion she atoned amply for the past, and became a great saint. You have prayed fervently, and still God defers answering your prayer. You may even be called hence without seeing your one desire accomplished, and your sacrifice in abandoning a loved and erring one to Him, is perhaps the very act which will obtain the grace so long desired. Let this thought encourage you to abandon the object of your solicitude to our Heavenly Father, who loves souls infinitely more than you do. By prayer and confidence, place your child in his Heavenly Father's arms, and *leave* him there. St. Mary Magdalen, after her conversion, gave up all that had been for her an occasion of sin; henceforth her wealth and time were devoted to Christ and His Apostles. What a lesson—to sacrifice all to the service of God as an act of reparation!

As we think of her kneeling at the feet of Jesus, we try in vain to fathom the depth of her love and contrition. The more she realised the love of our Saviour, the more her sorrow deepened. If, kneeling at the feet of Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance, we could, *if only once in our lives*, make our confession with something of her perfect contrition, we should rise, purified from every stain of sin, as from a second baptism. Let us implore her intercession that we may obtain this grace of perfect contrition, the fruit of perfect love. In the days of her wandering, Mary Magdalen had led souls from God; often she had caused others to sin: but now

all her efforts were directed to making known the love of Jesus. She did not fear the taunts of those who had known her in the past. We admire her courage, and feel that the noblest reparation for a fault is to own it bravely and endure the consequences patiently. The saints were ever the first to accuse themselves. As we gaze on her "*redeeming the time*," a still small voice whispers, "*Go thou and do likewise*." With God's grace we will be faithful to the inspiration.

Mary chose "*the better part*;" she is one of the few whom our Lord praised. He willed that wherever the Gospel should be preached, her name and deeds of love should be known. "*The better part*," "*the one thing necessary*," what is it but the grace of God which teaches us to appreciate the things of this world at their real value, and to esteem as dross, all that does not conduce to the salvation of our souls?

These are a few out of the lessons we may learn from a brief meditation on the life of the model of penitents, the adopted child of Mary, the lover of Jesus and His Cross. As we think of her now at His feet for all eternity, we will ask that, as we have so often imitated her in preferring the creature to God, so we may imitate her love and contrition. If her example has taught us to rise courageously after a fault, to pity and bear with others, and to advance generously along the road to holiness, remembering that *it needs more courage than time to make us saints*, then these moments have not been spent in vain by her side "*at the feet of Jesus*."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent St. Mary Magdalen anointing our Lord's feet and wiping them with her hair.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to imitate her contrition, faith, and love.

1st Point.—St. Mary Magdalen, before her conversion, abused the gifts of God. Then she came in contact with Jesus for the first time, made reparation for her sins, and was absolved.

2nd Point.—St. Mary Magdalen, henceforth a fervent penitent, is ever found at the feet of Jesus; in the house of the Pharisee, at Bethania, on Mount Calvary, on Easter Sunday.

3rd Point.—We may learn from her life to be detached from creatures, to profess our faith, to repair our faults generously, to have a deep sorrow for sin, to be zealous in God's service.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for the encouraging example He has given you in St. Mary Magdalen. Ask for grace to imitate her virtues. Make a sincere act of contrition for all the sins of your past life. Pray for sinners. Ask for the spirit of zeal.

Resolution.—To repair your faults promptly and generously; or, to confess your faith bravely.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.”

Prayers.—Our Father, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER V.

“THE MASTER IS COME, AND CALLETH
FOR THEE.”

“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” These words bring before us the beautiful scene of Jesus visiting Bethania when Lazarus was in the tomb. Mary sat at home weeping, surrounded by loving friends, who sought in vain to console her. Martha, having heard a report that Jesus was approaching, went to meet Him, and having seen and spoken with our Lord, *“she went and called her sister Mary, secretly saying, ‘The Master is come, and calleth for thee.’ She, as soon as she heard this, riseth quickly and cometh to Him.”* Then they went together to the grave of Lazarus, whom our Lord restored to life.

“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” May not these words be addressed to every Christian soul? Jesus visits each soul. He calls all to follow Him. Let us consider *who it is that calls; whom and where He invites, and why He needs us.* He who calls is God, our Master. We are His by creation. *“It is He that hath made us.”* All we have and all we are is due to His bounty. Our body with its senses, our soul with its faculties, are the work of His hands. Our

life is a gift that is renewed daily; for if the Creator did not sustain His creatures they would cease to exist.

Jesus is our Redeemer. He has purchased us with His labours and sufferings. So ardent was His love of souls that no sacrifice was too great for their salvation; and we are His by purchase. To the Holy Ghost, the gift of Jesus, we owe our sanctification. In baptism we were adopted as children of God, and every sacrament we have since worthily received has augmented our spiritual life and united us more closely to Him. As we consider the rights God has over us as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, we feel the truth of our Lord's words, “*One is your Master, Christ.*”

Magister adest. The Master is present everywhere as God. We live and move in Him. His divinity fills the universe. Have you ever passed a night in mid-ocean? The dead silence around, the starry vault above, and nothing but a few planks between you and the mighty waters of the deep. What solemn thoughts came over you as you paced on deck and gazed into space. Did you not seem to realise the presence of the Creator, whose glorious works you contemplated, while at the same time a sense of your own nothingness overwhelmed you? God is present in nature; the humblest flower reveals His handiwork.

Magister adest in the soul of every Christian in a state of grace. There He has a temple in which He dwells, as long as man wills to be blessed with that Divine presence. A little child is carried to

the baptismal font ; it is regenerated. God the Holy Ghost consecrates a new temple and dwells therein. It is a consolation to think that at least during the years of innocence, the Master holds undisputed possession of His sanctuary.

Magister adest hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. True to His promise, "*I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*"; our Emmanuel dwells on the altar of every Catholic church.

Magister adest in our neighbours ; in our superiors who govern us in His name and point out the right path ; to whom we render obedience for God's sake. Our equals and inferiors claim our charity also in His Name, and the poor are especially privileged to represent our Lord. How a deep sense of the presence of God, in all that surrounds us, would help us to live a holy life !

"*The Master is at hand and calls for thee.*" He invites each one. Our nothingness does not repel Him, because He wills to need us ; our very weakness attracts the Almighty God. He hates sin, yet all the while loves the sinner. There are times, as we all know, when we have been rebellious, and have preferred sin to the friendship of God ; still He has continued to call us. He stood at the door and knocked until we consented to open it. What an immense consolation to be able to say, "*The Master needs me.*" Every Christian, whatever be his station in the world, high or low, learned or ignorant, is needed by Christ, our Master, who loves and calls each personally. In the Sacred Heart there is room for all. The very fact that

God has created each individually, and placed him in the world, is a proof that each one has a work to do; for God does not create a soul without a purpose. Since this is so, it follows that each must do his work here below; another cannot supply his place; to each a definite task is appointed. Now stop and ask yourself if you have ever realised that the Master calls you personally to Him. Have you been cowardly enough to shrink back? Have you feared the consequences of following Him? These are home thrusts, to which all must plead guilty at some time or other. Thank God, there is still time to press on and to repair the past; for the Master is ever at hand, and continually calls.

Perhaps you ask, “Why does God condescend to call us—to have need of us?” Clearly because, in the first place, as our Creator, He cannot release us from our obedience to His laws. He calls us also because He loves us; and that love, which dates from eternity, has not lessened since we exist in reality, and not merely in the conception of God’s infinite knowledge. Love must communicate itself and share its possessions with the loved ones. God is infinite Love, and possesses all riches; hence He calls His creatures that He may unite Himself to them.

We, in truth, can add nothing to His intrinsic glory, but the homage of the creature increases the accidental glory of the Creator. Just as one masterpiece procures for the artist a fame, which thousands of indifferent productions would fail to obtain, so a great saint glorifies God far more than

many less holy souls. Hence God calls us that we may glorify Him, and in so doing He wills that we should procure our own eternal happiness.

Man has an instinct which impels him to seek his own happiness. Fallen as we are, we cannot forget the end for which we were created ; but our great error is, that we so often seek pleasure in the wrong object. We would be happy while we exclude God from our life ; and this is impossible, for the joys of earth can never satisfy an immortal soul.

Magister adest et vocat te. He calls thee for another reason. The harvest is ripe and reapers are needed. We are told *to pray* that God may send labourers to gather in the sheaves, but this is not all. We are also called *to labour*. Some are workers by profession, called to devote their whole time and labour to gathering in the harvest. But look, who are those who follow in the reapers' track ? They are gleaners, gathering up the stray ears "*lest they be lost.*" Are there no gleaners in God's field ? Yes, if the priests are the reapers, the laity are all gleaners. Each has a portion of the harvest field in which he can do something for God. There are numerous opportunities, even in the most uneventful life, of gathering daily something for the heavenly granary. Our Master calls us to do our share, to utilise the talents He has given us, to employ our time, wealth, or influence for the good of others. We must all work "*while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work,*" and that night may be nearer than we think. There is one special field—that of our own soul

—which affords us constant occupation. There virtues have to be cultivated, and bad habits rooted up. Christians cannot reply truthfully that they are idle because no man hath hired them.

It is clear that the Master calls all. Let us see when He makes His gentle voice heard. In childhood as soon as reason dawns, by Christian parents, holy influences and early teaching, the voice of the Master is heard, saying, "*My child, give Me thy heart.*" Constantly the voice of conscience reminds us of the invitation. Childhood gives place to youth, and God claims us more forcibly. Our work in life begins seriously, and our path must be a deliberate choice, one in which we can obey His call and lead Christian lives. Sometimes the invitation makes itself clearly heard, inviting to some definite field of labour. By the disposition of His Providence, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and in many other ways Jesus calls us.

The hour must come for each when, as we lie on our death-bed, the priest of God or a loving friend will warn us, "*The Master is come and calls for thee.*" To that call none can turn a deaf ear. Will the news rejoice us? Shall we long to gaze on our Lord and hear the words, "*Come, ye blessed of My Father*"? All depends on how we have obeyed the previous calls. If our reply has ever been, "*Here am I, Lord,*" then we shall have nothing to fear, all will be well, and our one desire will be to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Scripture furnishes us with numerous examples

of men being called by God, and we see how differently they responded to the summons. It will be instructive to compare two or three.

Adam and Eve had sinned, and when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise at the afternoon hour, our first parents hid themselves from the face of the Lord God amidst the trees of Paradise. "*And the Lord God called Adam and said to him, 'Where art Thou?' And he said, 'I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.'*" Fear was the cause of Adam's disobedience; it made him hide from the presence of God; and the consciousness of sin prevented Adam from obeying God's call immediately.

Jesus came on earth, and He taught people in parables. In that of the marriage feast He represents God, in the person of a certain man, who made a great supper and invited many. "*And he sent his servant, at the hour of supper, to say to them that were invited that they should come, for now all things were ready, and they began all at once to make excuses.*" Riches and the pleasures of this life were the principal reasons for their refusal; each gave a different motive, but all agreed in declining the invitation. Contrast their ingratitude and indifference with the conduct of blind Bartimeus, who "*sat by the wayside begging.*" He longed to be healed of his blindness, and desired so earnestly to approach our Lord, that he cried out, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!*" And Jesus, standing still, commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying to him: "*Be of better comfort; arise He calleth thee.*"

In this case there was no delay. The poor man was longing to hear that welcome voice, and, “*casting off his garment, leaped up and came to Him.*” There, at the feet of Jesus, he received the gift of sight, and “*immediately he saw and followed Him in the way.*”

Here is a perfect model of obedience to the Master’s call. Bartimeus leaped up and hurried to our Lord ; he cast off his garment lest it should impede his progress. True, he went that he might be healed of his blindness ; but are we not all spiritually blind, perhaps as regards some duty, and certainly as regards our own defects ? It will cost us many a sacrifice to obey, for we must first remove the obstacles that obstruct the path, break the chains that hold us captive. But sacrifice is a spur for a generous soul. When men support discomfort, hardship, separation from loved ones, and even risk life itself for fame—to win the Victoria Cross, for example—shall we be content to give God that which costs us nothing ? Henceforward, rather let it be our joy to hear and obey ; and by whatever means the message reaches us, “*The Master is at hand, and calleth for thee,*” like Mary Magdalen, rising up quickly, may we be prompt to follow.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Martha whispering to her sister, “*The Master is come, and calleth for thee,*” and then follow Mary Magdalen in spirit as she hurries to the feet of Jesus.

2nd Prelude.—Ask that you may always obey the voice of God, promptly and generously.

1st Point.—*God has a claim to our obedience*—as our Creator, our Redeemer. He is present by His grace, in the Holy Eucharist, in those who govern us in His name.

2nd Point.—*We are called*, notwithstanding our nothingness, weakness, and sinfulness. He cannot renounce his claim because—

(a) We are His creatures.

(b) He longs to bless us.

(c) To make us happy.

(d) He would have us work for Him.

3rd Point.—*When Jesus calls.* By Christian education, by conscience, voice of duty, death is the supreme call. Three examples from Scripture. Application.

Colloquy.—Thank Jesus for deigning to call you. Promise prompt and willing obedience. Ask for grace to overcome all obstacles.

Resolution.—To follow faithfully the inspiration of God's grace.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*”

Prayers.—Anima Christi, Suscipe.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JESUS, our Master, calls Himself the Good Shepherd, and in one of His most touching parables shows how He fulfils the office of pastor. The figurative language of our Lord must have captivated the attention of His hearers, and conveyed important truths to those who had "*ears to hear.*" While some probably grasped His meaning, others "*understood not what He spake to them. Jesus therefore said to them again 'I am the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine, and Mine know Me. As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for My sheep.'*" In these words Jesus gives us a beautiful picture of how He tends His flock. A shepherd's life is a hard one; he has no permanent abode, he roams about in search of water and pasture for the flocks. The only roof he knows is a shepherd's tent, which is a type of an unsettled dwelling-place. The Eastern shepherd habitually camped out at night. Jacob, who tended Laban's flocks, speaks of the hardships of the pastoral life. "*Day and night I was parched with heat and with frost, and sleep departed from my eyes.*" He speaks also of the dangers. "*Neither did I show thee that which the beast had torn; I made good all*

the damage, whatsoever was lost by theft thou didst exact." Let us follow the parable as our Master gives it, and consider how the good Shepherd *knows* and *guides* His sheep; and how He *nourishes, heals, and defends* them.

"*I know Mine.*" None could say the words so truly as our Divine Pastor. Each Christian can say, "My Shepherd knows me individually. I am not lost in the crowd. He knows the clay of which I am formed; every thought is open to Him. He knows all my hopes and fears, my good desires, my weakness and faults. Not a need is hidden from Him, not a single pang pierces my soul without His knowledge. Nothing is hidden from the eyes of the Good Shepherd. I can tell Him nothing that He does not know." This is a great consolation, which should encourage us to approach our Lord with firm confidence. There are hours in life, when sorrows crush us down and rob us of the power of speech. At such times it suffices that we kneel in silence before the Holy Eucharist; our sorrows plead for us. Jesus knows all, and the mute eloquence of a soul overwhelmed with grief, is a prayer that touches the Sacred Heart more powerfully than words. How often our Lord called to Him those whose infirmity prevented them from seeing or hearing that He was passing. How often He visited those who could not go to Him, and when the sick were brought on stretchers and laid at His feet *none* were sent away unhealed. In our trials we like to think that some one knows how we suffer, and sympathises with us; but who realises all we endure, in the way that Jesus does?

Of those whom the Father had given Him, none were lost save the "*son of perdition.*" This personal intimate knowledge, that our Lord has of each individual soul, is one of the greatest consolations and joys a Christian can have here below.

The Good Shepherd *guides* His sheep ; every event of our life is planned by Divine wisdom. As we look back on our past life, how many blessings in disguise has time revealed. We received them ungraciously ; we tolerated them as a hard necessity. Now we thank God with heartfelt gratitude for the path by which He has led us. How many like revelations are reserved for that day when all secrets shall be disclosed, and God's providence justified !

Since not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's knowledge, how then could He for one instant cease to interest Himself in His creatures ?

"*And when He hath let out His own sheep He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him because they know His voice.*" How often was the gentle voice of the Good Shepherd heard calling "*whom He would*" to follow Him ? Peter and Andrew, James and John, heard and obeyed it by the Sea of Galilee. Matthew was called as he sat at the seat of tribute. The rich young man also heard the words, "*Follow Me,*" but went away sorrowfully, "*for he had great possessions,*" Notice that Jesus guides, He does not force : our service must be spontaneous. Sometimes, like St. Peter, we shall be led whither we would not ; at least as

regards the lower part of our nature. We hear the voice of the Good Shepherd calling us, either by the voice of conscience, the order of a superior, or the disposition of Providence—our happiness for time and eternity depends upon our obedience. Jesus guides us, but He expects us to be docile and quick to follow. The path may be rough, but a glance at our Shepherd, who “*goeth before,*” will encourage us to toil on. “*They know His voice*”—this is true of those who give themselves sincerely to God. Do I recognise that voice when it calls to me to renounce self, to crucify the flesh, to detach myself from the things of earth? Have I the characteristic of the sheep of the fold, do I *know* His voice? Let us ask our Lord that we may not refuse to listen to His gentle invitation, while we stop our ears as far as possible to the solicitations of the world, the flesh and the devil. The disposition of a generous soul is ever, “*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.*” If only we are obedient we shall be able to say: “*He hath led me on the paths of justice for His own Name’s sake.*”

“*By Me, if any man enter in he shall be saved; he shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.*” The Good Shepherd does not leave His sheep to hunger, “*lest they faint on the way.*” Of old the Psalmist rejoiced in God as his Shepherd, and proclaimed the Divine bounty that provided for the sheep. “*He hath set me in a place of pasture; He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.*” The Good Shepherd came that His sheep might *have life, and that more abundantly.*”

How does Jesus *nourish* our souls? First, by

His grace, that Divine gift which steeps the soul in the supernatural life—that grace which was given for the first time at our baptism, and is constantly augmented as long as we are faithful to God. Grace was the “*living water*” of which our Lord spoke, when He said to the Samaritan woman : “*If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, ‘Give Me to drink,’ thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.*” And our Lord repeated His invitation when, in His eager desire to nourish the souls of men, He “*stood and cried, saying : ‘If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.’*”

Secondly, the Good Shepherd nourishes His sheep by the truths He reveals to them. “*Not in bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” How plentifully Jesus nourished His disciples with this bread of life ! Even His enemies were forced to confess, “*Never did man speak like this man*” ; while St. Peter exclaimed, “*Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” In reward for this sublime confession of faith the Apostle was made head of the Church, and to him was given the charge, “*Feed My lambs*”—“*Feed My sheep.*” The Church founded by Christ has performed this duty throughout all ages, ever mindful of the apostolic command, “*Feed the flock of God which is among you.*”

Thirdly, Jesus nourishes the sheep with His own precious Body and Blood. He told His hearers, “*I am the Bread of Life.*” “*I am the living bread*

which came down from heaven." "Amen, amen; I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." Many of those who heard Him were scandalized, and said, "*This saying is hard; who can hear it?*" Many are still scandalized, and refuse to hear it; but the true disciples believe and confess that "*with God all things are possible.*" On Maundy Thursday this promise was fulfilled when Jesus said, "*Take you and eat, this is My Body.*" What has it cost the Good Shepherd? Nothing less than His life, freely given for each and all.

Fourthly, there is that spiritual nourishment of which Christ spoke when He said, "*I have meat to eat which you know not.*" Then, seeing that the disciples did not understand, He went on to explain: "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work.*" We find Job uttering these beautiful words: "*I have not departed from the commandments of His lips, and the words of His mouth I have hid in my bosom;*" or, as it may be rendered, "I have esteemed as a necessary portion."

The will of God is indeed a real nourishment. Often devotional exercises have to be sacrificed when work presses: sickness may deprive us of the sacraments, but nothing, except wilful sin, can prevent us from doing God's will. Now, pause for a moment to see how you profit by the food which the Divine Pastor provides, since food must be assimilated before it can nourish us. Ask yourself: How do I esteem grace? Am I careful to

augment it by following the inspirations of the Holy Ghost? Do I value grace more than all the treasures of earth? Am I careful to nourish my soul by spiritual reading and meditation? Do I value religious instructions? As regards Communion, am I guided by obedience or caprice? How do I fulfil God's will? Is it my meat and drink? We are certain to find some imperfections and faults in the past; but a sincere act of contrition for them, together with a deep sense of gratitude to our Good Shepherd for all His mercies, and a firm resolution to profit better in future, will enable us to start afresh. We need strength to follow the Master, hence we must not neglect the food of the soul.

Jesus *defends* His sheep. "*The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep,*" and, before laying it down, during the forty days in the desert, he could have said, with Jacob, "*Day and night I was parched with heat and with frost, and sleep departed from my eyes.*" The three-and-thirty years that Jesus passed on earth were for His little flock. For the sheep He toiled, fasted, prayed, and suffered. Nothing was too much for His Divine charity. He gave all, even the blood that remained in the Sacred Heart after His soul had returned to God.

In the East, shepherds had to guard against thieves, who were ever watching their opportunity to rob the sheepfold. Beasts of prey prowled around and devoured the sheep, and often the shepherds were wounded or killed in defending their flocks against lions or bears. The fold was

surrounded by a high wall, and the shepherd usually carried weapons, the commonest of which was the sling, as we see in the case of David when he fought with Goliath.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, also defends His flock from thieves and beasts of prey. The world and the flesh would rob God of His own, while "*the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*" Against these our Shepherd defends us. He places the wall of his commandments around us as a protection. He wrestled with the devil and conquered by means of His five wounds, typified by the five smooth stones with which David went forth to meet Goliath. He warns his disciples how to resist the devil, how to overcome the seductions of the world and the flesh. By His grace, the Christian soul is enabled to conquer self, the greatest enemy of all. What more could He, who leads Israel like a Shepherd, have done for His fold?

But weapons are useless unless employed when needed, and the Christian must use the means of resisting temptation which the Good Shepherd provides. St. Peter tells us to be sober, and vigilant in resisting the devil. Jesus, our Master, bids us "*watch and pray*"; and loving obedience to God's commandments keeps us within the walls of the one true fold. Perhaps we have in the past strayed away from the Shepherd's care and exposed our soul to eternal ruin; perhaps we have helped others to wander. How can we repair the past? By fidelity in the future, and zeal for the salvation of others. Above all, we must defend those under

our care, those who depend on us, lest the Master should require their blood at our hands. If God is merciful He is also just, and if we are unfaithful to our trust "*what is lost by theft*" he will exact from us. This is an awful thought, but there is a brighter side. How dear to the Good Shepherd are those who, as far as lies in their power, help Him to tend the sheep and lambs. All have a mission in the world "a soul to save, God to glorify." Do we use the means of defence? Are there any breaches in the wall, that is, wilful carelessness about certain obligations? If so, the roaring lion will enter by them and make havoc in the soul. Let us live so that it may be truly said of each, "*You were as sheep going astray, but you are now converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*"

As it is a shepherd's duty to tend the ailing sheep, so our Divine Pastor tends His sheep. The soul, like the body, is subject to disease and even death; the devil inflicts wounds on the unwary, and many, like maniacs, wound themselves. Jesus seeks those who are wounded, that He may tend and heal them. He follows those who go astray, that He may lead them back to the fold. "*All we like sheep have gone astray; every one hath turned aside into his own way.*" To each, Jesus comes, saying. "*I am the Lord, thy Healer,*" like the good Samaritan, who bound up the wounds of the man that fell among thieves. How He wept over the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that knew not the time of their visitation! How lovingly He healed the wounds of those who came to

Him with a contrite heart. The Good Shepherd has not changed. He is Jesus, that is Saviour, "*yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*" He still continues His office of healer through the Sacrament of Penance, where souls are not only healed, but even restored to life. "*We are the sheep of His hand.*" He cannot forget us ; our salvation, which was so dearly bought, cannot be a matter of indifference to the "*great Pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

So often we read in Holy Scripture of our Lord healing all who were brought to Him. This should encourage us to go with confidence to the feet of Jesus, when we have fallen into sin. There we shall find healing and strength.

It is also an incentive to bring others to Him, to work in the one true fold, where there is always room for helpers. You may say, What can I do ? my time is fully occupied ; or, I am too poor to help. None are too busy or too poor to pray that workers may be sent, if they cannot go themselves, and all can contribute to the sanctification and salvation of others by *good example*. The one thing necessary is that you do *your part* ; small though it may be, true love renders it very precious in the sight of God ; and "*when the Prince of Pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory,*" and be counted among the redeemed "*when He shall set the sheep on the right hand.*"

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus, our Master, uttering the parable of the Good Shepherd.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to follow the Good Shepherd generously and constantly.

1st Point.—The Good Shepherd knows His sheep individually. He guides them in every event, spurs them on by His inspirations, and expects them to be docile.

2nd Point.—The Good Shepherd nourishes His sheep with

- (a) His grace.
- (b) The true faith.
- (c) The holy Eucharist.
- (d) The will of God.

3rd Point.—The Good Shepherd defends us from thieves and robbers at the cost of His Precious Blood. He sets up the wall of His commandments, and provides us with spiritual weapons. He heals us and even raises us to life by the Sacrament of Penance.

Colloquy.—Thank the Good Shepherd for His infinite love ; beg pardon for having so often erred from the fold, and having caused others to stray. Promise to do better in future. Ask for the grace you most need, and that you may never distrust His love.

Resolution.—To be docile to the inspirations of grace.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—" *My sheep know My voice.*"

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Our Father.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

The bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." These words were spoken by Jesus to the Jews in the synagogue of Capharnaum, shortly after He had fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. This miracle was typical of one of our Lord's greatest gifts to man, and in the discourse which followed Jesus tried to raise the hearts of His hearers above the figure, to the reality which it foreshadowed. "*This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die.*" "*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up in the last day.*" "*He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.*" The Jews who listened to our dear Lord were scandalized, and "*they strove among themselves saying, 'How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?'*" Jesus then confirmed His words: "*Amen, amen, I say to you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.*" He did not tell them they had mistaken His meaning, but emphasised the truth concerning the living bread, and confirmed His promise. To many it was "*a hard saying,*" as it still is to those who have not faith. We are told, "*after this many of His*

disciples went back and walked no more with him." Jesus sorrowfully saw them depart, and turning to the twelve, said, "*Will ye also go away?*" Peter, with his usual impetuosity, was spokesman for the others; his faith and love were proof against the "*hard saying.*" He replied: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.*" All the Apostles were present when Jesus asked this question, and the whole scene must have come back to them, a year or so later, when in the upper chamber Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and gave them the living bread, saying, "*Take, eat, this is My body.*" Then for the first time they realized what He meant, and tasted the sweetness of the heavenly manna. As we meditate on our Lord's discourse to the Jews concerning the Blessed Sacrament, we notice how Jesus points out various effects of Holy Communion. It is to be the *life* and *food* of our souls, the *bond* that unites us to Him, a *pledge* of our glorious resurrection and eternal life.

Let us try to nourish our soul with these solemn thoughts, and ere we begin we will invoke the assistance of the Holy Ghost, that we may find in them the special instruction and spiritual profit which He wills we should learn from them. The bare idea of meditating on the Holy Eucharist seems to bring home to the soul a feeling of utter incapability to grasp such a stupendous mystery. To fathom something of its depth would require a seraphic intelligence and burning love. The Holy

Eucharist—it is the continuation of the Incarnation, the mystery of love, and the foretaste of the eternal union of God with man. But what we cannot understand by the mere exercise of our natural powers, Jesus can and will reveal to us, if we ask Him with faith and humility. “*Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief,*” is ever our earnest supplication when we kneel before the tabernacle, at the feet of Jesus. “*I am the Bread of Life.*” “*If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.*” “*He that cometh to Me shall not hunger.*”

These words show clearly that one of the effects of Holy Communion is, to strengthen and nourish the soul. In the Sacrament of the Altar, our Lord is a source of life and strength. There the Christian is fed with the bread of life. Man is composed of body and soul: the former has its origin from the earth, “*dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,*” therefore its nourishment must spring from the same source. The body, of the “earth, earthly,” needs to be nourished with the produce of the earth. But the soul is a spirit: it was breathed into us by the almighty power of God: its origin is divine, therefore its nourishment and strength must be supplied from above. “*Not by bread alone doth man live.*” The precious gift of sanctifying grace placed in our soul the germ of that supernatural life which, like the natural, must grow and develop. As the growth of the body cannot continue unless we take food, so the growth of the soul is dependant on spiritual nourishment.

When we were regenerated by the Sacrament of Baptism, the spiritual life of our soul began. God’s

grace took possession of our soul, and infused supernatural life, which needs to be nourished and strengthened. How is this accomplished? Prayer, religious instruction, good works, are all means of strengthening our spiritual life ; but the great channels of grace are the sacraments, and pre-eminently the Holy Eucharist, when we receive the Author of all grace, and are united to our Lord. Just as the body needs food to repair the different tissues which work has weakened, and, further, requires material to develop the different organs, so in the spiritual life there are losses to be repaired and holiness to be acquired. This is a work beyond human power which extends into the region of the supernatural. Our Saviour, knowing this, has provided the necessary means, and as the soul is so closely united to the body that we can only reach the former through the senses, the chief means of grace are the sacraments or outward signs, which appeal to the senses and reveal what is being effected in the soul.

Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is our spiritual food—the living bread. Thus, the soul of man, which God breathed in him, is nourished by the source whence it sprang. It is necessary that we should realize these facts, if we are to be earnest in nourishing our souls. Hence, our Communions are not to be regulated by our feelings. To-day we feel devout and pious, and we approach the altar ; another time we stay away from Communion because we are dry and distracted in prayer. This is a mistake. Just as we force ourselves to eat when we lack appetite, because we know we

need strength, so the means of grace which furnish our spiritual food must not be omitted, because God refuses us feelings of great fervour.

In Holy Communion Jesus unites Himself to the soul. It is penetrated by His Divine presence, as the rays of light penetrate and fill the atmosphere which surrounds our earth. The Divine presence fills our soul in proportion to our preparation and degree of holiness, just as the light of the sun traverses more or less, according to the density of the air and the clouds that intervene. These rays have ever the same intensity, but the medium through which they pass may facilitate or bar their passage. How wondrously Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, illuminates the souls of His saints when He unites Himself to them in the Sacrament of Love. What marvel that the effects of this divine union were sometimes manifested in the very features of the saints ; rather is it not a continual miracle that Jesus hides His glory when He visits and unites Himself to the soul of man, just as the Transfiguration was rather the suspension of a miracle as far as our Lord was concerned?

You may ask, " How is it possible that Jesus can thus come to His temple, and unite Himself to us, while often, we are so cold and indifferent ? " There are several reasons for this real or apparent coldness. Perhaps we are careless about our preparation, especially the remote preparation which, in a sense, is more important than the proximate ; so, when our Lord comes, since we place obstacles in His path by our attachment to venial sins and want of fervour, the effects of His

grace are diminished. Clearly, if we are conscious that this is the reason, the remedy lies with us. Another cause is, that man realises so little what Communion really is. We grasp the things of this world because they fall under our senses, while spiritual things appeal only to faith, and this is far beyond the reach of what is merely natural. If you place a blind man in front of a painting that is a masterpiece, you do not expect an outburst of admiration from him. He can only gather what the picture is like from the description he hears, and, lacking sight, can form no conception regarding the harmony of colour. Nevertheless the picture is there in all its beauty, the product of a master mind, and a work of art that will never cease to glorify the artist.

When our Lord fed the five thousand He made use of the five loaves and two fishes ; when He prepared a meal for His disciples on the sea shore, He provided the food by His own power. Hence, we see that God can do a great deal with a very little, and can create all from nothing. Something like this happens in the economy of our sanctification. When God takes possession of a soul by baptism He does not ask the little infant to co-operate with grace. All He exacts is the absence of obstacles, and then He performs His Divine work of mercy.

Look at that little child that is waiting at the font for baptism. The soul is stained with original sin, it is displeasing in God's sight, and were it to die, could never see God, for "*Nothing defiled can enter heaven.*" The priest arrives,

he pours the water and pronounces the sacramental words, and a transformation takes place. That child's soul is now filled with God's grace, the germs of faith, hope, and charity are placed in it. The Holy Spirit takes possession of another temple, and marks it with His indelible seal. Of all these wondrous gifts nothing appears exteriorly ; it is our faith only which reveals them. Truly God alone is Creator.

At other times He wills to accept the little that we offer, and to multiply it by His infinite power. Thus we wish to receive Communion and do our best to prepare ourselves. Jesus adds His grace, and when He comes, the effects of His visit, in proportion to our miserable efforts, are as the abyss between the natural and supernatural, between earth and heaven. Never forget that our Lord can do His work in your soul independently of your merits. Thus, when you are preparing to receive the food of angels, and your mind wanders, and prayer is difficult, or again, when on a sick-bed pain and weariness render prayer almost impossible, remember that the chief part of the preparation must be made by *our Lord Himself*, so ask Him to prepare your soul, and if, after receiving Him, you are still cold and unable to pray with sensible fervour, then implore our Lord in all simplicity to accomplish in your soul that end for which He came. He knows what you need, better than you do ; He sees defects that are hidden from your eyes ; and, above all, He loves you with an infinite love. Your preparation is well made, if, with a deep sense of your own weakness,

you repeat the prayer "My Jesus, prepare my heart to receive Thee"; your thanksgiving will be also well made, if you are only able to ask our Lord to accomplish His heart's desire in your soul. In such a thanksgiving there is humility and confidence, two virtues which ever attract our Divine Master. You will return home after such a Communion calm and peaceful, thinking more of God and less of self, with a deeper conviction of your own nothingness and realizing more fully the meaning of those words of St. John the Baptist, "*He must increase and I must decrease.*"

It is good after Communion to unite ourselves to our Lord for a short space in silence, and ask Him to work in us and to reveal His Will. "*Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?*" He will not leave this prayer unanswered, but will show us some bad habit to correct, some repugnance to conquer, an act of charity to perform, and numerous other little deeds of virtue that we are tempted to overlook, while waiting for what we deem great occasions of practising virtue which rarely come. Snow crystals form mighty avalanches, so let us utilise the lesser occasions, and we shall not fail to grasp the greater when they present themselves, for "*he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful in that which is greater.*"

Eternity alone will reveal to us the mystery of the union of Jesus and the soul in Holy Communion. He has told us, "*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him.*" And again: "*As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth*

Me, the same also shall live by Me." To understand this wondrous union which enables us to live by Christ, as He lives united to His Heavenly Father is beyond human comprehension. We believe and adore, we see now dimly, as in a glass; but when faith shall have given place to the vision of God, then only shall we be able to thank our Lord for the gift of the Holy Eucharist, which was the beginning of that union between God and the soul, which shall endure throughout eternity.

Not only is Holy Communion our food, a source of strength, and a bond of union, but it is a gage of a glorious resurrection and of eternal life. In Communion we receive the sacred Humanity of our Lord, for the sanctification of both soul and body. It is like a germ of immortality, for Christ's promise is formal: "*I will raise him up at the last day.*" "*He that eateth My flesh . . . hath everlasting life.*" How can it be otherwise since our Lord promised to prepare a place for us in His Father's house? In what does that preparation consist? Surely in fitting each soul for the degree of glory to which it is destined to attain, and which is in direct proportion to the perfection of the soul here below, since glory is but the fruition of grace.

This is a consoling thought for those who are tempted to distrust God as regards their eternal salvation. Have we not received Communion frequently in our life, and each time the germ of immortality has been deposited in us? How, then, can our Lord fail to accomplish His promise: "*I will raise him up at the last day.*" Angels watch

over the dust that has been sanctified by contact with the sacred Humanity, and if we do our little part, Jesus will do the rest. This constant union with our Lord should also teach us to respect the purity of our soul, lest we sully God's dwelling-place. Sin is a profanation of His temple and a baseness unworthy of our noble destiny. *Sursum corda* is a good motto for all who are tempted to cling to earthly treasures. Holy Simeon was detached from this world, and longed for death after he had held our Lord but once in his arms. How much more should we, who receive our Lord frequently, be detached from the things of earth? We are children of God, and we must not forget or disgrace our noble birth. The tongue, consecrated by the body of Jesus and destined to sing the praises of God for all eternity, must not be the instrument of sin. The heart which has cradled our Saviour cannot harbour evil thoughts or give entrance to sin. *Sursum corda*, because we are immortal, and the things of this world cannot nourish our soul.

How we should strive after holiness if only we realised more vividly the glorious destiny which awaits us, and that only in time we can merit. We will try to profit more by our Communions, that our Lord may work in us and accomplish His good pleasure. As we strive to fathom somewhat the infinite love that prompts Him to be the life and food of our soul, and the pledge of our eternal beatitude, a deeper feeling of gratitude will urge us to endeavour to be less unworthy of the precious gifts of our Emmanuel.

Kneeling at His feet while we reiterate our prayer, "*Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief,*" we shall with all the fervour of our soul add this ejaculation : "*Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.*"

O Jesus, hidden God, I cry to Thee ;
 O Jesus, hidden Light, I turn to Thee ;
 O Jesus, hidden Love, I run to Thee ;
 With all the strength I have, I worship Thee ;
 With all the love I have, I cling to Thee ;
 With all my soul I long to be with Thee ;
 And fear no more to fail, or fall from Thee.

* * * *

O sweetest Jesus, bring me home to Thee ;
 Free me, O dearest God, from all but Thee ,
 And all the chains that keep me back from Thee ;
 Call me, O thrilling Love, I follow Thee ;
 Thou art my All, and I love nought but Thee.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus in the Cenacle instituting the Holy Eucharist.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for the grace of greater devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

1st Point.—The Holy Eucharist is the life of our soul. "*I am the Bread of Life.*" It strengthens and nourishes the grace received in baptism ; its effects depend to a great extent on our preparation.

2nd Point.—The Holy Eucharist is a pledge of eternal life ; hence we should go to the altar with confidence. By Holy Communion our Lord prepares us for the degree of glory which we are destined to attain.

3rd Point.—To receive worthily, we must respect the purity of our souls, strive to detach ourselves from the things of this world, and live in the spirit of the *Sursum corda*.

Colloquy.—Thank our Saviour for His unspeakable gift. Ask pardon for past coldness and indifference ; pray for the grace to realise more fully what the Holy Eucharist is. Ask our Lord Himself to prepare your soul to receive Him ; place yourself under the protection of Mary, that she may assist you in preparing for Holy Communion.

Resolution.—In view of your next Communion, detach yourself from anything that is an occasion of sin or imperfection [specify].

Offerings of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“ O make us love Thee more and more.”

Prayer.—Hymn, “ Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All, etc.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

HOLY SCRIPTURE tells us that "*the life of all flesh is in the blood*," hence we use the words blood and life as synonyms. We say, indifferently, a man sheds his blood for his country, or he gives his life for it. The two phrases convey the same idea. Jesus, the Son of God, deigned to take upon Himself our nature—He "was made Man"; that is to say, He had a perfect human body, to which was united a human soul. Blood flowed in His veins just as it courses through ours; but since the second Person of the Blessed Trinity united Himself to that human body and soul, that blood is infinitely precious.

The Incarnation is the realisation of the designs of the infinite love of God for His creatures. It was revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and accomplished when the *Ecce ancilla Domini* was uttered by Mary in answer to the archangel's message. Jesus came on earth to be our Redeemer, and the Precious Blood was to be the price of the redemption of mankind. He did not wait until the bitter agony of the Crucifixion to shed His blood. It flowed the first time at the circumcision, then our Saviour gave the first-fruits of His Precious Blood, and offered Himself to His Heavenly Father for our salvation.

Throughout three-and-thirty years Jesus longed for the time when He should be able to pour it forth in living streams on the Cross. After a life of toil and suffering, came the agony in Gethsemani. In that lonely garden, in the stillness of the night, Jesus prayed with bitter tears. The weight of sin crushed Him down, the deep waters of our iniquities flooded His all-holy Soul. If, when we suffer acutely, those moments of intense agony seem as years, what an eternity those hours in Gethsemani must have seemed to our Redeemer! "*Being in an agony, He prayed the longer, and His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.*" So great were our Saviour's sufferings that His life was sustained only by a miracle. His garments were wet with blood, the earth was bedewed with it. That Precious Blood cried to Heaven for pardon for sinful humanity. The angels gazed in awe and adoration on the Son of God prostrate in Gethsemani; they ministered to our Saviour, for St. Luke tells us, "*There appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him.*"

Was not the blood which Jesus shed in His interior Passion sufficient for our salvation? Yes; but He had not yet given all, and willed to show us the excess of His love, that He might touch our hard hearts. Then came the terrible scourging, when, according to a tradition, the Roman soldiers far exceeded the number of stripes allowed by the law. The Precious Blood was poured forth in greater abundance even than in Gethsemani. The earth, the whips, the garments of the soldiers were

wet with it. All the time Jesus kept silence and endured these cruel torments, glad to atone for our sins by shedding His Precious Blood. Still even this did not satisfy His love, He willed to do more. The soldiers gave our Lord His garments. What agony it must have been to take them off again. How His blood must have gushed forth when the white robe was put on Him by Herod's soldiers, and again when it was exchanged for the purple mantle. The torment of the scourging was at least inflicted by order of the unjust judges ; now the soldiers, inspired by Satan, invented fresh cruelties : having crowned Jesus with thorns, the cohort mocked at His royalty. They forced the long, sharp thorns into our Saviour's sacred head, and again blood flowed. "*Behold the Man.*" None ever suffered as He, the Lamb of God ; none ever had so many executioners, for in His bitter Passion we each had our share : it was our sins that caused the Precious Blood to flow. The mock homage over, the purple mantle was taken off, and our Lord resumed his own garments. The awful wounds re-opened, causing Him unspeakable agony.

Then followed the long journey to Calvary, and our Lord, laden with the weight of the heavy Cross, shed His blood at every step. Twice He fell beneath the burden, and if the cruel Jews compelled Simon to help Jesus to carry the Cross, it was not from a motive of pity, but because they feared their victim would expire before He reached Calvary. At last He arrived at the summit of the hill, the soldiers bade Him lie down on the Cross, and the blows of the hammer resounded when the nails

were driven through His hands and feet. The blood spurted forth as the iron pierced the arteries and the fountains of salvation flowed. Mary, our Mother, heard each blow, and her heart was crucified interiorly. What were our Lord's sentiments? Ever those of love and compassion ; as the crimson life-streams flowed forth, there was no complaint. Our Lord spoke but one word of pardon : "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*" The Cross was lifted into its socket. Who can imagine what torments our Lord suffered, and how His Blood was poured out, when He hung suspended by the nails in His pierced hands and feet, which sustained the whole weight of His body? Throughout those long hours the blood trickled from His sacred veins until the moment when He gave up His Spirit into the hands of His Heavenly Father.

All was over. Jesus had expired and our salvation was accomplished. Yet there was still some blood in the Sacred Heart, and Jesus willed it should also be shed, and the prophecy was accomplished when a soldier pierced His side and "*immediatcly there came out blood and water.*"

Truly Jesus gave His Precious Blood constantly and generously. He had shown His love even unto the end. What marvellous effects that blood was to accomplish. It was the ransom offered for each human being that ever has existed and ever will exist. By its merits we obtain the pardon of our sins and the grace necessary to sanctify and save our souls. The souls in purgatory are delivered when it is offered for them, and the

saints in heaven have all cleansed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. The Church on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven, owes its redemption to the Precious Blood.

How often we profit by it during our lifetime. Every faithful Catholic has constantly received the sacraments of the Church. Were it not for the Precious Blood there would be no sacraments. It is thence they draw their efficacy, and they apply its merits to the soul of the recipient. In infancy, our soul was clothed in the white robe of innocence, and purified by the Sacrament of Baptism. As often as we have made a good confession, the purifying streams have cleansed and healed our souls. Never has absolution been refused when we have approached the Sacrament of Penance with the proper dispositions. Frequently our spiritual life has been nourished and strengthened by the Precious Blood in Holy Communion, and thus we have been enabled to walk on bravely in the narrow road, that leads to eternal life.

Of old in Egypt, the destroying angel passed over the houses, which were marked with the blood of the paschal lamb, and was not allowed to strike the inmates of those dwellings where that sacred sign was placed ; how often we have been protected from the fiery darts of the evil one by the Precious Blood. God has marked us for His own, and no temptation can assail us without His permission.

Holy Mass is a priceless treasure of the Church, because in it, Jesus again mystically offers His Precious Blood for the salvation of mankind.

Often we need some special grace for ourselves or those dear to us. There is no prayer so efficacious for obtaining it, as the Sacrifice of the Mass. We can offer up the Precious Blood as the price of the grace we solicit. When we offer *so much and ask so little* in comparison, how can God refuse our request if we pray with faith? Perhaps the favour we beg, is not for our good; then God gives other graces, for no prayer is ever fruitless. Thus, like St. Paul, we may ask to be delivered from a temptation; but our Heavenly Father may see that it is wiser to give us strength to bear it, and He loves us enough to refuse our requests when it would be injurious to grant them. When God has taken away a member of our family or a dear friend, what better means have we of obtaining the deliverance of that soul from purgatory than by offering up the Holy Sacrifice for this intention. At every Mass, the Church prays for her children who have departed this life in the grace of God; and she never prays in vain, since the Precious Blood cannot lose its power.

As we contemplate our Lord shedding His blood so freely for the salvation of man, how it should lead us to appreciate the value of an immortal soul? We estimate an article by its price; what, then, is the worth of a soul for which the Precious Blood was shed? What an awful thought it is that countless human beings think so little of their immortal souls. We have but one life: salvation is a personal affair. God will not save us in spite of ourselves, but He has provided us with the means: for each and all, the Precious Blood has been poured

forth. Are there any dear to you who are erring on the broad road? Offer for their salvation the ransom our Lord puts in your hands; pray fervently and with confidence, and sooner or later your prayers will be heard. Are you zealous in striving to bring souls to God as far as lies in your power? Our Heavenly Father does not mean us to lead a selfish life here below, engrossed only with our own concerns and forgetful of the needs of others. A zealous Catholic can do so much good by example and precept, and he who is zealous for the salvation of others, need not fear for his own. The Master will not let the faithful servant go unrewarded. It is a beautiful thought that we can each in our own sphere, high or low, contribute to the end, for which our Saviour gave His life, and thus help the Precious Blood to bear fruit. Yet, at the same time, it is an awful responsibility. With David, we have all need to cry out, "*Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.*"

Some solemn questions come home to each. Am I striving to do good in the world? Should I be missed if God called me hence? Do the interests of God and the Catholic Church touch me? Do I fulfil my duty to those over whom I am placed? In a word, am I a help or a hindrance to the salvation of others? There is no neutral ground. "*He that gathereth not, scattereth.*" Thousands of nominal Catholics lead a selfish life, wrapped up in their own joys and sorrows, untouched by those of others and yet life is so short and souls are so precious. While for gold, pleasure,

or ambition, such indifferent Catholics strain every nerve, for a good work they will not stir. What marvel they forget others when they are so heedless of their own souls. We all know many such, and can offer the Precious Blood for them, that they may be awakened to a sense of their obligations and fulfil them.

Those who do realise something of the value of an immortal soul, and are striving to do good in the world, have need of constancy and generosity in their works of zeal. Works of charity must not be undertaken merely by fits and starts. There are difficulties to surmount, and the labour in the vineyard needs courage, patience, and perseverance. How can we better obtain these virtues than by meditating on the Precious Blood, the ransom that has been given for those souls that we are trying to bring to God. Self-love is apt to mar even our best works, and many an earnest worker will give up a labour of love on account of some petty jealousy. Often it is difficult to live and work in harmony with our fellows. There are so many aspirants for the first place, that all cannot be satisfied, and it needs virtue to descend without murmuring, from what we deem our rightful position. After all, it is one of the purest of joys here below to help others onward, and the cross must come in somewhere. The very difficulties we experience in carrying out a good work, are the gage of its success ; and solid virtue is necessary to rejoice *as much at the successes of others, as for those God accords to our personal efforts*. Suppose that the whole of our long life of toil and suffering

had only for result the salvation of our own soul and of *one* other, would not such a life be not only worth living, but amply recompensed? We have daily and hourly such innumerable occasions of doing good by helping others, conquering self, obeying the still small voice of God in our soul--and each victory glorifies the Precious Blood, and is due to its efficacy. Our Saviour will have a special welcome at the last day for those who have co-operated in the salvation of others. If truly "*Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have a right to the tree of life,*" how much greater blessing will be reserved for those who, having sown the good seed with tears, come home rejoicing, and bringing their sheaves with them?

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent to yourself Christ in His agony in Gethsemani ; see the drops of Blood bedewing the ground, as our Saviour lies prostrate.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to value the Precious Blood, and to profit fully by It, for yourself and for others.

1st Point.—We owe the Precious Blood to the love of God. Jesus shed His Blood :—

At the circumcision.

At the scourging.

At the crowning with thorns

On the road to Calvary.

When nailed to the Cross.

When His side was pierced.

2nd Point.—By Its merits we obtain
The pardon of our sins.
The grace to sanctify and save our souls.
The deliverance of the souls in purgatory.

3rd Point.—We profit by It
At our baptism.
When we make a good confession.
In Holy Communion.
When we hear Mass.
When we offer It for the needs of others.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for the inestimable gift of His Precious Blood. Ask that It may not have been shed in vain for you. Offer It for the conversion of sinners. Beg pardon for the times when you have failed to profit by It. Ask that It may purify your soul more and more.

Resolution.—To rise *immediately* after a fault, and to ask pardon through the merits of the Precious Blood.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have a right to the tree of life.*”

Prayer.—Soul of Christ.

CHAPTER IX.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

“There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother. . . . When Jesus therefore saw His Mother, and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His Mother, ‘Woman, behold thy Son.’ After that He said to the disciple. ‘Behold thy Mother.’” Thus did Jesus bestow His last gift before He left this earth. John standing at the foot of the Cross represented all who should belong to the one true Church; and each Christian can claim Mary as his mother, the precious legacy bequeathed by Jesus when dying.

Mary was the second Eve. She nobly fulfilled the mission which the latter failed to accomplish, and is in all things, the perfect type of womanhood. As such *she loved* with all the intensity of her soul, *she served* as the “*handmaid of the Lord*,” and *suffered* as no other creature ever has suffered or ever can suffer.

Mary loved God with all the ardour of which her pure soul was capable. He was the centre of her thoughts; for Him all her actions were performed. Jesus became incarnate, and her love deepened daily as she united herself to and lived for her Divine Child. Who can describe the ecstasy of love that filled her soul when she gazed on Jesus

for the first time, or conceive how that love grew as she watched and tended Him? No other creature disputed the Creator's place in her heart. Jesus had the first rank. Mary was the only Mother to whom it was permitted to *worship* her child, the Word Incarnate. Every instant of her life she received an increase of charity, and when her spirit left this world, it was the fire of burning love that broke the bonds, which held her captive in the flesh.

Not only did Mary love her Divine Son, but she loved all who were dear to Him. She ministered to the Apostles, and we may piously believe she assisted the holy women. From the moment that Jesus gave us to her on the Cross, she received us with a mother's love. Even sinners have a place in her heart. Mary did not rebuke the thieves who blasphemed against our Lord on the Cross. When St. Peter had denied Jesus thrice, a tradition represents him going to Mary for help.

After the Ascension, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Apostles and disciples persevered in prayer, until the Holy Ghost descended on them. Mary loved sinful humanity for her Son's sake ; she did not stand aloof in the dignity of her Immaculate Conception and Divine Maternity. We find her with Mary Magdalen, whom all knew to have led an evil life. The notorious sinner, whom the proud Pharisees passed by scornfully, found a welcome from our pure Mother.

Mary, our Mother, *served* ; she was true to her motto, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*" She served God as He willed, with her whole soul and

strength. As a child she devoted her time and labour to the service of God in the Temple. When she left its sacred precincts she served St. Joseph, and strove to render his home comfortable, as far as their poverty permitted. After the birth of Jesus she ever tended Him with a mother's care ; and later, during His public life, was ready to minister to His wants as far as she could.

Jesus left this earth, and then Mary assisted the infant Church, aiding the Apostles by her advice and revealing to them many things concerning our Lord. A tradition tells us that St. Luke especially, learnt from her lips many details contained in his Gospel concerning the infancy of our Saviour. She whose life was that of "*a handmaid*" claimed no preference for herself as the Mother of God. Like her Divine Son, Mary knew her mission was not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

Serving implies suffering ; if it be true that love sweetens toil and pain, nevertheless, it does not remove the sting or weariness. None ever drank of the chalice of the Master so deeply as Mary. All her sorrows began when Jesus came, for He gave her a share of that Cross which He loved and desired so ardently. Our Blessed Lady suffered in her reputation "*when Joseph was minded to put her away privately,*" yet she kept silence and gave no explanation of the mystery of the Incarnation. She respected the secret of God and was willing to endure humiliation, rather than betray it. Mary suffered at Bethlehem, when there was no room in the inn for Jesus. How the coldness and ingratitude of men must have afflicted her loving soul ! On

the fortieth day she bore the Divine Infant to the Temple, and then the first sword of sorrow pierced her heart ; and the wound was doubly painful since the prophecy affected her Son, whom Simeon spoke of as a sign which should be contradicted. The sojourn in Egypt, was a time of poverty and hard labour to secure the necessaries of life. It was an exile from home and friends, and above all from the Temple of God. Mary must have suffered intensely at being obliged to live among idolaters. Still Jesus was with her, and the trial was not so bitter as when she lost Him at Jerusalem, and in company with St. Joseph, "*sought Him sorrowing.*" Perhaps she thought that the hour of the sorrow prophesied by Simeon had come. But the path of suffering was to lead to deeper anguish.

Jesus left His Mother's roof to begin His public life, and when He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, He went into the synagogue, according to His custom on the Sabbath-day, and He rose up to read. But His countrymen refused to listen ; "*they rose up and thrust Him out of the city, and they brought Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong.*" Certainly this incident would have been related to Mary, both by the friends and enemies of Jesus ; but how she must have suffered as she thought of the future, though she knew that on this occasion, "*passing through the midst of them, He went His way.*"

When the hour of the Passion came Mary was ready to take her share of suffering. What anguish overwhelmed her soul when she saw Jesus before

the tribunal of Pilate, when she followed Him to Calvary, and witnessed the Crucifixion. The Mother of Dolours stood there for three long hours while her Son was in the agony of death, and offered her sufferings in union with His, as she watched by Him till the last.

When the body was taken down, Mary prepared it for burial and followed her Son to the sepulchre. Then she returned to Jerusalem, and what must have been the loneliness of those hours during which her Son lay in the tomb !

Easter dawned at last and brought its joys ; but Mary's cup of suffering was not yet emptied, for, deprived of her Son's visible presence, she voluntarily remained on earth after He had ascended, in order to render service to the Apostles, and only when God called her to receive the crown of immortality for all eternity, did Mary cease to suffer.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the type of the perfect woman, has *loved*, *served*, and *suffered*, and Jesus on the Cross gave her to be *our model*, *our protectress*, and *our mother*. Mary accepted us as her children ; our weakness and sinfulness give us a claim on her love. But, above all, she loves us because we are so dear to Jesus.

Our Blessed Lady is *our model*. In her we see the Christian virtues in all their beauty. We have seen something of her deep love of God, of her perfect *obedience* and her *patience* in suffering ; but of how many other virtues she gives us an example ! Look at her transcendent *purity* ; how she kept the treasure of sanctifying grace ; how, unlike Eve, she resisted the temptations that assail every creature.

Never did the slightest sin stain our Immaculate Mother.

Contemplate her *humility*. She preferred to suffer, rather than reveal the favours of God. She kept all the words and secrets of the Most High in her heart and pondered over them. Mary claimed no place of honour; she worked no miracles during her earthly life. Poverty and toil were welcome as due to the condition of a creature. Since Jesus had chosen them for Himself, could she desire or enjoy the comforts of life, while often her Son hungered and had not where to lay His head?

Mary is also our model of zeal. St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb when our Blessed Mother, bearing her child, saluted her cousin Elizabeth. She spent her life doing good, ministering to her Divine Son and His disciples. None, except Jesus, our Master, realised the price, and hence the value of an immortal soul, as Mary did, and no creature ever had such ardent zeal for the salvation of men. If St. Paul was willing to suffer anathema for the brethren, how much more would Mary have had this sentiment. We cannot in one brief chapter study all the virtues which our Lady practised, but each can find in her life the perfect pattern of the one which he most needs.

Mary is also our *protectress*. In the hour of need she defends her children against temptation and danger, and strengthens them to fight against self and the world. The devil had no power over Mary. She conquered him, and is therefore powerful to defend her children. Often we have said to

her, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Never have we asked her aid in vain. Only in heaven shall we know what graces we have received through her intercession, how often she has shielded us from danger or obtained for us the grace to resist temptation. Can our Mother do more for her children than she has done? When Mary received us on Calvary as her children, God gave her a mother's love for all the human race.

The Mother of God is also our Mother. To her loving and maternal heart we can confide our joys and sorrows. All that touches us concerns her. No human being could ever sympathise with us in our needs as the Immaculate Mother of God. Just as the least endowed or most afflicted child is generally the special object of a tender mother's love, so those who are spiritually weak are specially pitied and tended by Mary.

Now let us see how we treat our heavenly Mother, and what return we strive to make for all her love and care. What can we give her in return? Surely the most certain marks of our gratitude would be to *love her*, to *imitate her example*, and to *strive to increase the number of her devoted clients*.

Do we love our Blessed Lady? If so, then no day will pass without some act of homage in her honour. Her feast-days will be celebrated by a fervent Communion.

Imitation is the true test of our love. Do we look to her as the best model, after Jesus, of all virtues? How difficult we find it to bend our stubborn will,

to yield to the will of God, to accept the dispositions of Divine providence. Still more do we find it hard to obey those placed over us. How many make independence their idol, and thus forge the chains of slavery around their neck while boasting of their liberty. Man's passions, and the devil, are the hardest of taskmasters. Mary, our Mother and model, was not thus deceived. She perceived that true greatness lay in obedience rendered to God for His own sake, and to superiors for God's sake. As maiden, before and after her sacred espousals, as a mother, Mary was constant in her practice of the virtue of obedience ; so when we find it repugnant to yield to a just command, when our evil passions struggle for the mastery, let us ask our loving Mother to intercede for us, and obtain for us the grace to imitate "*the handmaid of the Lord.*"

When we find it difficult to suffer patiently, let us ask the intercession of the Mother of Sorrows, who suffered in her reputation and in her affections. Her greatest sorrows were those of Jesus, and they came to her through Him. So now how often the sorrows of others oppress us, and such trials are heavier than those which affect us personally. Abraham was told to sacrifice his son, and with heroic faith he prepared to obey ; but God was only trying the obedience of His servant, and as Abraham was about to strike the fatal blow, an angel stayed his hand. But no angel came to deliver Jesus. Mary stood by, until He breathed His last in expiation for our sins. She drained the chalice with her Son. So when

our hearts are burdened, because those we love are called to bear the cross and we cannot alleviate their sufferings, our heavenly Mother will sympathise with us, and obtain grace and strength for us, if we invoke her with confidence.

Yet the great crosses, for the most part, are few in number; generally, our chief trials are the smaller irksome duties of life, the lesser crosses that weary us by their multiplicity. These too we must learn to accept, and, like the "Virgin most faithful," be generous enough to give God all He asks, be it great or small. Years of our Lady's life were passed in the performance of ordinary household duties, which she ennobled by her purity of intention. If "the common round, the daily task," is our chief cross, let us take it up cheerfully with the help of our heavenly Mother. When the hour of our death comes, then she whom we have so often asked to assist us at that supreme moment, will not desert us; and having done our best to love, serve, and suffer, we shall reap an exceeding great reward, and contemplate Mary, our Mother, in the glory of heaven, where she reigns, the Queen of Saints and Angels, with Jesus, her Divine Son.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus dying on the Cross. He fixes His gaze on St. John, saying, "*Behold thy Mother.*"

1st Prelude.—Ask for a child-like, confiding love of our Lady.

1st Point.—Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was the perfect type of womanhood ; as such :

- (a) She loved God for Himself and her Divine Son ; all creatures in and for God.
- (b) Mary served. She obeyed the laws of God, tended Jesus with a mother's care, and assisted the Apostles and holy women.
- (c) Mary suffered ; in her reputation, in her inmost soul when Jesus suffered, especially during his public life and during the Passion.

2nd Point.—Mary is given us by Jesus as :

- (a) A model. In her we find all the virtues, obedience, patience, humility, zeal, etc.
- (b) A protectress, who shields us from the assaults of the devil.
- (c) A mother, who loves and watches over us.

Colloquy.—Thank God for the gift of Mary. Ask for grace to imitate her virtues. Make an act of contrition for past negligence. Humble yourself for having been so unworthy of your Divine Mother. Ask for increased devotion in her service.

Resolution.—To practise the virtue you most need [specify in detail certain acts].

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“ Behold thy Mother.”

Prayers.—Anima Christi, Memorare.

CHAPTER X.

THE EASTER GREETING.

"Peace be to you; it is I, fear not," were the words that fell from our Saviour's lips when He appeared to the Apostles on Easter Sunday evening, and again when He showed Himself to the eleven a week later. This greeting comes like a continuation of the angels' song at Bethlehem, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."* Jesus came to bring this divine gift to earth, for He is our peace, and He sent His Apostles preaching the gospel of peace. Sin had come between the creature and the Creator, and where sin reigns, there is tumult and warfare.

What do we understand by Christian peace which is a fruit of the Holy Ghost? One of our Lord's parables will make it clear:

"Every one, therefore, that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock."

"And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock."

As the house founded on the rock, stood in spite of rain, wind, and floods, so the Christian soul, rooted and grounded in hope, remains steadfast amid the tempests that assail it. A peaceful soul

can face and support the trials of life bravely, upheld by that strength and calmness which are the fruits of a firm confidence in Divine Providence. Peace, like humility, is a virtue that attracts us by its own beauty and sweetness.

Christ's Easter greeting was no mere form ; it was a legacy He bequeathed to His Apostles, who were pre-eminently "*men of good will*"; hence our Saviour's salutation infused that grace into their souls. What is the work of peace in the Christian soul? It has a threefold aspect: it affects our relations with *God, our neighbour, and ourselves.*

At peace with God: this is the most essential, and, rightly considered, it includes the other two. When is a soul at peace with God? When there is no "*wall of partition*" between the Creator and the creature. The great barrier that separates man from God is sin, and where mortal sin exists in the soul, there can be no peace. The sinner may lull himself into a false security, he may delude himself into believing that all is well ; but it is not by saying, "*Peace, peace,*" when there is no peace, that we cause it to spring into existence. Those who live the farthest from God will praise peace, and even speak of their desire to possess it hereafter ; but, as the writer beautifully expresses it : " People are always expecting to get peace in heaven ; but, you know, whatever peace is there they will get ready made. Whatever of making peace they can be blest for, must be made on the earth here " (Ruskin). It is one of the devil's tactics to delude the sinner thus, lest he open his

eyes to the awful danger, to which his soul is exposed.

Clearly, then, for those who are at enmity with God there can be no peace. While mortal sin raises between God and a soul an insuperable obstacle which totally excludes peace, venial sin destroys peace, in proportion as it is committed more or less wilfully or frequently. God is not fully Master in such a soul ; interests clash, alternately the devil and self claim their part and dispute their right with the Creator, who refuses to share His throne with a creature. The soul is uneasy and troubled by this conflict, calm and security are unknown, for "*God is not the God of dissension, but of peace.*" We are told God will speak peace unto His people ; but He cannot do so, to those tepid Christians, who give Him only what He commands under pain of eternal damnation, and would fain reserve the rest for themselves. Such souls are not honestly included in the "*men of good will,*" and have little or no claim to the reward.

All souls are not called to the same degree of holiness. In our father's house there are many mansions ; there the saints have not all the same grade. To those called to a higher Christian life, who are bound by vows to follow the evangelical counsels, there are other obstacles to peace. For such, even wilful imperfections would cause a certain uneasiness of mind and disturb their peace. The more perfect a soul is, the nearer it is to God and the more clearly it perceives the deformity of sin. Hence, when a Christian resists God even in

smaller matters, when he refuses to yield to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, when he sacrifices the graces which are offered, and has not the courage to walk generously along the narrow road, then the pricks of conscience make themselves felt. He seems to hear the Master's reproach : "*It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.*" We have the fatal power of resisting the Spirit of God, but to our own detriment. "*The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace;*" but only to those in whom the Paraclete can work freely.

Here the question comes home to each, "Am I at peace with God? Do I avoid even the smallest sin? Am I generous in following the inspirations of grace?" If the answer is in the affirmative, then I am obeying the precept, "*Seek after peace and pursue it,*" and have the right to expect it. God loves a willing giver, He turns his countenance to them and gives them peace.

By the precept of our Master, we are also bound to be at peace with our neighbour. Jesus, speaking to His Apostles, said, "*Have peace among you;*" and St. Paul tells us to "*follow after the things that are of peace, and keep the things that are of edification.*" To live peaceably with others is not easy, it requires self-denial. It is necessary to support their defects, to be willing to take a lower place, if not the lowest, to have sufficient virtue to overlook a slight, habitually to put others first, and to avoid anything that may lead to contention, remembering that the object, for which we are tempted to contend, is of less value than peace. Often it merely needs tact to avoid a collision,

while thoughtlessness engenders many a quarrel. How a mother bears with a wayward child, supporting his humours, overlooking smaller faults, ever willing to forget and forgive his disobedience, his rebellious outbreaks of temper. Maternal love is the secret of her forbearance. Charity alone bears all and never fails. Hence, if we truly love our neighbour, we shall have less difficulty in supporting their defects. "*God hath called us in peace.*" He tells us, "*Love ye truth and peace.*" Hence we must do our best to fulfil the Divine commandments.

Are we at peace with our neighbour? Do we follow after the things that are of peace? We must confess that it is not always in our power to live peacefully with others; for if it takes two to make a quarrel, one is sufficient to destroy peace. St. Paul foresaw the difficulty when he warned the early Christians, "*If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men.*"

There is a limit which we may not overstep in making concessions for the sake of peace. God's rights, the purity of our own soul, the *real* good of others, are never to be sacrificed for an apparent good. Such a peace, false and dishonourable, would incur the anger of God. A person who has a weak character, a gentle, clinging nature, will often be tempted to sacrifice duty for the sake of peace. Clearly this is wrong, and such a one must remember that we are only bound to be at peace "*if it be possible.*" Pride is often the obstacle for independent characters. Their attachment, to what they imagine to be their due, is fatal to peace.

Each must see for himself what is the greatest obstacle to his living peaceably with all men, and then by prayer and generous constant efforts strive to conquer it.

Again, evil tongues are often busy, and cutting remarks are made about us. Unfortunately, there are always some who are ready to do the devil a good turn, by retailing these calumnies or detractions. If only they realised what havoc they make of peace! What results from such ill-timed officiousness? The person about whom the remarks have been made, must be a saint if he can hear them placidly and take no heed. Rarely this happens, for we do not meet great saints every day. Consequently, such conduct must almost produce angry feelings, which express themselves by uncharitable words and coldness towards the person who allowed the "*unruly member*" full liberty to attack a fellow-Christian. Often the evil goes farther, and a downright quarrel ensues.

One of the most difficult precepts to obey, is that which bids us forgive one another. Peace takes flight where strife and contention enter. As we look back on our past life how often have we had to reproach ourselves with helping to sow seeds of discord, by heedlessly or wilfully repeating things which we knew would vex others and cause mischief? How many sins have we occasioned by so doing? Yet, like the angels, man has a mission to propagate peace on earth. A stone, when cast into a deep well, sinks into the bottom and disappears from view. If thrown into a shallow pond it remains visible, and is magnified by the deviation

of the rays of light ; so an unkind remark, a scandal told to one who is virtuous and prudent, sinks down and disappears from sight, while an inconsiderate person, like the shallow pond, magnifies and reveals the calumnies to every passer-by. Let us not rob the earth of peace—that beautiful gift of God. Rather will we try to merit the fulfilment of the promise, “ *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.* ” “ Children of God ” we are by our baptism ; but to live up to our noble title we must be ready to forgive and forget, to help others to live in peace. We should do well to ask ourselves if we are in peace to-day with all. Is there one to whom we refuse to be reconciled, to whom we bear ill-will ? In this case, the first effectual step towards having peace is to do our part, to forgive as far as we are concerned, and God will not refuse His peace to us because our neighbour has not the generosity to forget the past. Have we contributed to spread scandal, to estrange others ? Have we caused angry feelings to rise and bitter words to be exchanged, either by our thoughtless indiscretion or wilful malice ? Clearly, then, our duty is to try and repair the past as far as possible.

Lastly, we must be at peace with ourselves. To attain this, we must be prepared to wage an incessant warfare against our corrupt inclinations and passions. This is a difficult task, which many have not the courage to undertake. They are among those of whom Thomas à Kempis speaks when he says, “ There are some who are neither at peace within themselves nor suffer others to be in

peace" (Book II. ch. 3). What are the means we must take in order to enjoy peace? The same author tells us, "Let go desire and thou shalt lay hold on peace." There is no tyrant so exacting as the ruling passion, when uncontrolled by the grace of God. There is no slave so degraded, no creature so far from peace, as he who obeys its promptings. The soul that yields to inordinate desires, is its own tormentor. Self-control, which infallibly leads to peace, can only be obtained by waging war against our lower nature.

Many earnest souls rob themselves of this precious gift of peace by needless anxieties and fears. They cannot trust their Heavenly Father, and pass their whole life doubting and distrusting His mercy and love. Their fears make life a continual torture. Perpetually the question arises, "Has God forgiven me? Did I make a good confession? Was my contrition real? Did I confess all my sins? Was this or that action a mortal sin?" So these souls brood over a long list of fears and doubts, scrupulous about anything and everything *except the sins they commit in distrusting the goodness of God*. Such people never seem to see the inconsistency of wasting time over possible or probable faults, while they are daily and hourly sinning against hope by distrusting the infinite love of our Heavenly Father. They forget that hope is a theological virtue, though they would reproach themselves with offending against charity, and the mere phantom against faith or purity causes a panic of anxious fear. They deliberately

persist in sins against hope, refuse to obey their confessor, and will even, in certain extreme cases, abstain from confession and Communion, under the pretext that they are not sufficiently well prepared. Meanwhile, the devil robs them of peace of soul, he throws dust in their eyes, while he commits the theft, and in their blindness they do not perceive the cunning trick of the old serpent. Fogs have caused many accidents on the ocean, and the mariner fears them more than tempests. In the spiritual life, what havoc the fogs of doubt and diffidence cause! How much wiser would it be to go to God with confidence and say, "*Lòrd, Thou wilt keep peace, because we have hoped in Thee. Thou wilt give us peace, for thou hast wrought all our works upon us.*"

What remedies are there for scrupulosity? There are several. The first is patience with ourselves. We must learn to rise above anxiety and fear, to despise false reasonings, and never voluntarily to yield to them or to discuss with self or the devil. You may say, "I cannot get rid of these thoughts." Possibly not entirely, but you can ignore them, though they continue to annoy you and you cannot forget their existence; remember, it is one thing to be conscious of these distrustful thoughts, and another to yield to them. An example will perhaps make this clear. One hot day you make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament; you are doing your best to pray, when some flies annoy you. Would you cease your prayer on that account? Evidently not; you would try to continue your devotions, and, though the flies might

not allow you to forget their existence, still you would neither quit the church before the time, nor change the subject of your meditation and think of the flies. Is this clear now? Treat the devil with contempt; often, stung by such conduct, he will leave you, only, however, "*for a time.*"

Another remedy for the fog of doubts and fears is to follow the advice of our confessor; he is our certain guide. We cannot pierce the mists that surround us; but as the compass ever inclines northward, so truly does the voice of obedience show us the path wherein God wills us to walk. If we refuse to obey, we merit the reproach of God addressed to His chosen people: "*O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, thy peace would have been as a river.*" Obedience will give us peace, and enable us to rise above ourselves, and to commit our soul for time, as well as for eternity, to the pierced hands and Heart of Jesus.

How often we have prayed, "O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace." Our Saviour, who has inspired that sublime prayer, will infallibly grant our petition, if we, on our side, do our best to be at peace with God, by keeping our conscience pure and living in His grace: at peace with our neighbour, by striving to do good to all; and, lastly, at peace with ourselves, by constant generosity in God's service and submission to His will.

Jesus, our Master, has promised, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" The Apostles echoed this greeting of our Lord, and constantly

saluted their disciples in similar words. "*The Lord of peace Himself give you everlasting peace.*" A humble and contrite soul is always peaceful, for God is with the truly penitent. "*I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, and I healed him, saith the Lord.*"

When the Holy Ghost dwells in a soul as His temple, He communicates His gifts, of which peace is one of the most precious; and as we advance in holiness this virtue continually increases, for "*The work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice, quietness and security for ever.*"

Of old, the prophets assured the Jews, "*He will give you true peace*"; and God Himself promised, "*I will give peace in your coast; you shall sleep and there shall be none to make you afraid*"; and God is faithful to His promises. We need peace, since it helps us to bear the sorrows of life, which are inevitable. We can go boldly to the feet of our Saviour, and there plead for that quietness of soul which He, the "*Prince of Peace*," has purchased for us with His Precious Blood. The storms of life will have an end, and then, if we have been faithful to God, we shall enter into that eternal home, where "*The wicked cease from tumult, and there the wearied in strength are at rest.*"

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus appearing to His disciples on the evening of Easter Sunday, and saying to them, "*Peace be with you.*"

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to enjoy that perfect peace, which is the gift of Jesus to His disciples.

1st Point.—Our Lord wills that we should have peace; it is His legacy. Mortal sin destroys peace, venial sin diminishes it.

2nd Point.—We must be at peace with our neighbour. This entails mutual support, patiently bearing wrongs and forgiving our enemies.

3rd Point.—We should live in peace with ourselves; to do so we must control anger, and, firmly grounded in hope, live above our anxieties and fears.

Colloquy.—Thank Jesus for the gift of peace. Ask that you may oppose no obstacles to it. Pray for those who are at strife. Make an act of contrition for the sins, by which you have banished peace from your soul in the past. Ask for grace to amend.

Resolution.—To live in peace with all, especially any one who has offended you, *as far as it depends on you.*

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—"Grant us Thy peace."

Prayers.—Our Father, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PARTING BLESSING.

THE mission of Jesus on earth was over. For three-and-thirty years our Emmanuel had lived here below as one of us. Now His labours and sufferings are over ; man's ransom is paid, the justice of God is appeased, and the prophecies, concerning His earthly career, have been fulfilled, save one, and that is to be accomplished now. Jesus is to ascend as a conqueror, and to receive as Man, the reward of His bitter Passions.

As we think over the Gospel narrative and accompany our Saviour in spirit to the Mount of Olives, let us see what lessons He would have us learn. As far as we can gather from Holy Scripture, Jesus appeared to the disciples at Jerusalem ; probably it was in the Cenacle, where He had given them His flesh to eat and His Blood to drink. There He shared a meal with them. We may believe that our Lady and the eleven Apostles were present, as well as the holy women ; and doubtless the one hundred and twenty disciples, who saw Jesus ascend, were gathered together for this last meal. As they sat at the table, Jesus spoke plainly of His departure, but possibly His holy Mother was the only one who fully realised that this apparition was the last. The meal over, they recited the usual Psalms, and then our Saviour led them out as far as Bethania. In the midst of the

little band, the Master passed through the streets of Jerusalem, visible only to the disciples. His enemies were not allowed to see Him: a little later many of them were to be converted, but they were to accept the doctrine of the Resurrection on the testimony of the Apostles. One had stood in their midst, whom they knew not; so it is often now. Christ is with His Church, He is present with His own; guiding them in the right path, sustaining them by His force, and nourishing them with the Holy Eucharist. Where man can see nothing more than is human and finite, true faith perceives that which is divine and infinite. The Christian soul is the temple of God. The Holy Eucharist veils the presence of Christ, who is with His Church to the end of the world; and flesh and blood hath not revealed this, but our Father, who is in heaven.

As they left the city they turned eastward; on their way they must have passed Gethsemani and Bethphage. What remembrances would these places bring, both to Jesus and to each of those who accompanied Him? The one recalled the hour when Jesus endured His agony in the garden, and when the Apostles all forsook Him and fled. The other was the village, whence He started when He entered Jerusalem in triumph. As they pass along, while the disciples and their Master converse, may not we suppose the holy souls from Limbo, and the angels, accompany invisibly and pay their homage to the Conqueror? What is the subject of conversation? Holy Scripture tells us, "*They, therefore, who were come together asked Him, saying:*

'Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?' But He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power.'"

This question shows how little progress the disciples had made in the science of the Cross. For three years their Master had tried to make them understand that they were called to a life of suffering and self-denial, and that He had not come to found an earthly kingdom; and now, just when we should have thought the lesson was finally mastered, we see how little they had profited by His teaching. This should console us when we find certain truths so difficult to grasp practically. The disciples were men of good will; Jesus Himself taught them; yet they misunderstood and still yearned after an earthly kingdom. They had seen the Crucifixion of their Master, without fully realising what it was meant to teach them.

Gently He rebuked their curiosity; "*It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power.*" Here Jesus gives us also a useful lesson; so often we have sought to unravel the secrets of God. We would know what is going to happen to one we dearly love, we long to pierce the veil of the future and see what it conceals. Yet it is not for us to know what God has wisely hidden. For better is it to trust to the infinite love of God, and to say from the depths of our soul:

Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see the distant scene,
One step enough for me.

While Jesus forbids His disciples to indulge in

idle curiosity or ambitious desires, He points out the path in which they are to walk, and confirms their glorious mission. “*You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth.*” For the last time, He bids them go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature, and the Church, ever faithful, still continues to fulfil our Lord’s command. By the priesthood, spiritual powers are communicated to the successors of the Apostles, to carry on the work committed to them; but are the clergy the only witnesses? No, God wills that each should let his light shine before men, that they may see His good works and glorify God the Father.

The humblest Christian has a mission on earth, and one of the most effectual ways of doing good is, by the silent preaching of good example. Perhaps we often pray for the conversion of England to the Catholic faith, and we do rightly; but prayer remains sterile if unaccompanied by a good example. Suppose the Catholics of England, stirred up with a sincere desire to emulate the saints and to live up to their faith, were to enlist in a crusade against worldliness and self-indulgence? What would be the result? England would be speedily converted; for those who resist words, because so often they have experienced their hollowness, cannot stand against example. In the early Church, it was the spirit of charity and detachment of the Christians that won so many souls to God, and the conversion of St. Paul

has been attributed by St. Augustine and other Fathers of the Church to the prayer and *example* of St. Stephen. Our words, our deeds, our whole life, are either *a help or a hindrance* to the extension of the Catholic Church. Truth is a necessary quality in a witness. How far, in my daily life, do I speak the truth concerning the doctrines of Christ? In what does my conduct calumniate His teaching? Our ordinary confessions always reveal some inconsistency; and for an earnest Christian, to see a fault, is the prelude to remedying it. It is a consoling thought that Christ gives to all His followers the strength to be witnesses. To us, as to the disciples, the promise is made, "*You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost.*" For God never calls us to witness without giving us the necessary graces, provided we pray earnestly for them. All Christians receive the Holy Ghost in Baptism, and again in Confirmation He takes even fuller possession of the soul and gives a title or right to His precious gifts as we require them. If we are weak it is our fault. We have not because we ask not, for the Divine promise, "*Ask, and ye shall receive,*" can never fail.

Now let us contemplate Jesus and the little band, as they reach the top of the mountain. Mary is near her Divine Son; she gazes on Him whom she is to see no more for a time, and realises fully what is about to happen. The Apostles, too, fix their eyes on Jesus; probably they had not the same knowledge. For forty days they had seen their Master appear and disappear, and perhaps they yet hoped to see Him as before.

But the last moment had come and the earth was to be deprived of the visible presence of our Lord. "*And when He had said these things, while they looked, He was raised up.*" How that faithful band must have gazed breathless with awe and adoration as Jesus, "*lifting up His hands, blessed them; and it came to pass while He blessed them that He departed thence and was carried up to heaven.*" Our Emmanuel left this earth, leaving His loved ones to the care of His Mother and St. Peter. All eyes are still fixed on Him as He rises, and even "*when a cloud received Him out of their sight,*" they still stood looking up to heaven. How we should have loved to witness the Ascension, and to have received the parting blessing of our Emmanuel. Need we envy the Apostles; do we not often receive the blessing of our Master when we attend Benediction? Do we value this privilege? If so, we shall never lose it through our own fault. Perhaps as we look back we must confess with shame that for some slight pretext, or a trivial pleasure we have sacrificed Benediction, and thus deprived ourselves of our Saviour's blessing.

"*A cloud received Him out of their sight.*" How often in our daily life this happens. There are various clouds which conceal our Lord. *Despondency* is one of the commonest. All seemed bright and hopeful when, with or without any apparent cause, we find ourselves low-spirited. The future now looks dark and gloomy, life is robbed of its joy and we go heavily about our work, perhaps indulging in the morbid satisfaction

of nursing our grief. *Trials*, be they real or imaginary, are clouds that hide our Lord and make Him seem far off, while in reality He is close at hand. *Spiritual desolation*, like a thick dark cloud, often robs us of the sensible presence of Jesus. There are many other clouds, but the essential is to remember that they are but clouds, which only veil Him for a time; they do not separate us from Him. Jesus continued to ascend, accompanied by the saints whom He had delivered from Limbo, while millions of angels escorted their God and sang their hymns of joy, as they celebrated His triumphal entry into heaven.

What were the sentiments of those who were left standing on the Mount of Olives ravished in ecstasy? They, too, were filled with joy. Presently a celestial vision was granted them: "*Behold two men stood by them in white garments who also said; 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, so shall He come as you have seen Him going into heaven.'*" Then they returned to Jerusalem "*with great joy,*" and "*all there were persevering with one mind in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and His brethren.*"

Notice their dispositions — *joy*, because the Master had entered into heaven; *spirit of prayer and charity*; "*with one mind*" they prayed with Mary, to whom the disciples clung as the one, left them by Jesus to console them for His absence, and who most reminded them of Him. Mary rejoiced that her Son had returned to the bosom

of His Father; there was no shadow of regret for *her* loss, no thought of self, crossed her pure soul; she lived for God and the Church. The Apostles imitated her in rejoicing that their Master could never suffer again. Mary and the disciples "*were of one mind.*" There was charity; all were servants of one Master, all had the same aim and the same hope. In union they persevered in prayer until the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost.

How much we may learn from this narrative. The Christian should be *joyful* in the service of God and in presence of a sacrifice: he should *live in charity* with others, *persevere* in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, learn to detach himself from the things of earth and to pass this life "*looking up to heaven.*"

Which of these lessons do we most need? Are we tempted to be sad? Do we dwell on the seamy side of events? Then we must remember that the true Christian always has motives for rejoicing. Jesus has entered into His rest; Mary, our Mother, is crowned for all eternity, thousands of our brethren are now enjoying the vision of God in those realms of bliss where our Master is preparing our place.

Trials are inevitable, but God can harmonise such contradictory elements as sorrow and joy; and when mental or bodily pain attacks us, by the grace of God we can rise above it and rejoice, knowing that our light tribulations last but a moment compared with the joys of eternity, and that they "*procure us an eternal weight of glory.*"

Jesus wills that even when the cross presses on our shoulders, our joy shall be full, and we honour our Lord when we serve Him "*abounding in joy.*" Often selfishness is at the root of our sadness. There is no greater obstacle to joy than egotism. It is *so natural* to put self first. Yes, that is just the point, it is only too natural ; but we must aim at something higher, for we are called to a supernatural life, and must "*seek the things that are above.*" To put self last, to renounce our inclinations and wishes for others, can only be the fruit of earnest prayer and strenuous effort. Then only can we live in charity with all, and be of one mind with our fellow-creatures.

Jesus had left Mary and the Apostles, but how their thoughts must henceforth have been raised from the things of earth. All their conversation was in heaven, whither He had preceded them. What lasting joy could they, whose treasure was in heaven, experience on earth? Our Lord tells us, "*where your treasure is there will your heart be also.*" So it should be for all who love God, for their life is an exile ; earth is not a home. We are not made for the things of this world. As Christ left this world, so we one day must leave all, and the soul that has lived for God, will joyfully obey the summons.

Perhaps we are sadly wanting in filial love for our Blessed Lady. Yet she is our Mother, given us by Jesus on the Cross. Do we have recourse to the intercession of Mary in our needs? Do we try to spread devotion to her?

There is ample matter in these points for practical resolutions. Let us choose the one that *costs us most*, and if we persevere generously in the pursuit of any one virtue, we shall possess them all, and be ready to meet our beloved Master when He shall come again and take us to Himself. Then we may hope to hear the words, "*Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you.*"

There in our true home we shall gaze for ever on Him, whom we have loved and served, and throughout eternity, worship "*at the feet of Jesus.*"

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus ascending to His Father. As He blesses His Mother and the disciples, a cloud receives Him out of their sight.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to be detached from the things of earth, and to live as strangers and pilgrims here below.

1st Point.—Jesus appears to His disciples in the Cenacle and sits at table with them; then He leads them out as far as Bethania. They converse by the way. Jesus represses the curiosity of the disciples. He confirms their divine mission.

2nd Point.—The last blessing of Jesus. As He rises from the ground the disciples stand gazing up to heaven, until a cloud receives Him out of their sight.

3rd Point.—The angels appear and prophesy

that Christ shall return again. The disciples return with great joy to Jerusalem, and with one mind persevere in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Colloquy.—Ask that you may be detached from the things of earth. Beg of God to break the chains that hold you captive, and ask for the gifts of joy and charity from Him who has received gifts from men. Place yourself under the protection of Mary. Beg of her to obtain for you the grace to persevere in prayer.

Resolution.—To give up anything that prevents your sanctification, especially [here specify]

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.*”

Prayer.—Magnificat or Suscipe.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOLY GHOST.

"If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him to you." These words fell from the lips of our Divine Lord as He sat at table with His disciples after the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. He had just given them the precious gift of the Holy Eucharist, and then He promised to send the Holy Ghost to console and strengthen them, when He Himself should have returned to His Father.

This promise was fulfilled on Whit Sunday. When *"the days of Pentecost were accomplished"* the house in which the disciples were assembled was shaken as with a mighty wind, and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of *"parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."* What a marvellous transformation the Paraclete effected in the Apostles. Instead of remaining with closed doors for fear of the Jews, they went forth to preach boldly into the open places, and rebuked those, who had put our Lord to death. The Apostles were to found the Church, to preach the Gospel to every creature. Already Christ had given them their divine mission, and now He gave them the means to accomplish it.

As we attribute our creation to the Father, and

our redemption to the Son, so we ascribe to the Holy Ghost the work of our sanctification. He is the *Lord and life-giver*, the *source of all our holiness*, the *teacher* who leads us into all truth, while He *consoles* us in our sorrows, and *pleads* our cause before the mercy-seat. He comes to complete the work which Jesus began, through His Divine aid the Church was founded, and every good desire or holy deed is due to His inspiration and assistance. He is the Author of our sanctification :

All within us good and holy
Is from Thee, Thy precious gift.

How few seem to realise this. There are various popular devotions, but how seldom one hears of devotion to the Holy Ghost. How many Christians never invoke the Holy Spirit directly, except in the liturgical prayers. It has been said that this devotion is peculiar to those who are specially called to the higher paths of sanctity, to a deeper interior life. Certainly, the love of the Spirit of God shone forth pre-eminently in the lives of most of God's saints. The early Christians were penetrated with a deep sense of His mission, the marvellous story of His descent on the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost was fresh in their minds. Many had seen and experienced the miraculous effects which often accompanied Confirmation in the apostolic age. Almost every page of the New Testament brings in the name of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and since by Him the prophets spoke, the Old Testament is also full of references to the Spirit of God.

We so often join with the lips in those solemn

words of the Creed: "Credo . . . in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem." Let us try to realise what these words mean. The Holy Ghost is Lord and life-giver. Job tells us: "*The Spirit of God made me, and the breath of the Almighty gave me life.*" The Apostles constantly repeated this truth. It is the "*Spirit that quickeneth.*" What is a state of grace but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? He sanctifies the soul and consecrates the body as His temple, He vivifies our meanest actions and makes them meritorious for heaven.

In a lifetime, in spite of our wilful sins and human frailty, how many holy inspirations we have had, and how many good deeds we have at least tried to perform. Each was due to the gentle prompting of the Spirit of God, ever pointing out the right path, suggesting the more perfect way and yet respecting man's liberty, never forcing his free will. Day by day, hour by hour, the work of our sanctification is progressing, provided we co-operate with His grace. Every prayer uttered, every sacrament received, every good deed performed, we owe to His infinite love. He gives us both to will and to execute that which He proposes. In the sacraments He operates most effectually; each one worthily received, deepens and develops our spiritual life. When we think how often we frequent these means of grace, what spiritual treasures we must acquire, and this even when we have nothing more than the dispositions which are strictly necessary. From the cradle to the grave the work of our sanctification goes on, provided

we put no obstacles in the way and it progresses in proportion to our good will. God, the Holy Ghost, deigns to dwell in our soul, to be our Guest; nothing less than mortal sin drives Him from His temple. Often we resist His inspirations, and stubbornly refuse to yield; then He abases Himself and condescends to plead with us. Our want of courtesy does not drive Him away, unless, alas, we "*extinguish the Spirit*" by grievous sin. We have this fatal power, for the Apostle warns us, "*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" Even then He waits and pleads for re-admission. What earthly friend would submit to be thus treated? Each and all must acknowledge with sorrow:

We have grieved Thee, gracious Spirit,
Wayward, wanton, cold are we;
And still our sins, new every morning,
Never yet have wearied Thee.

The Christian kneels down to pray, and the same Spirit, that led Jesus into the desert to wrestle with God in prayer, leads us to the throne of grace. Like children, we stammer over our prayers and know not what to ask, and the petition rises to our lips, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" Our Divine Guest takes pity on our weakness: "*For we know not what we should pray for, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And He that searcheth the heart knoweth what the spirit desireth, because He asketh for the saints according to God.*"

As He sanctifies our prayers, so too, He renders our works pure in the sight of God, our oblation

is made acceptable and sanctified in the Holy Ghost. God the Father cannot refuse the offerings thus made. When our Lord was about to quit this earth, He told His disciples that it was expedient for them that He should go away, saying : *“ If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him unto you.”* Then He went on to explain the great work of the Holy Ghost. *“ When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth.” “ The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said unto you,” “ He will convince the world of sin, of iustice, and of judgment.”*

The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son, was to come as a Consoler and a Teacher. We all need consolation, for the trials of life are a heavy burden and we ourselves are often our own greatest cross. How does the Paraclete console those in whom He takes up His abode? He fulfils His mission by the sevenfold gifts He showers upon us. He enlightens our understanding, He strengthens our will, while by the gift of wisdom He enables us to value the salvation of our immortal souls above all the advantages which wealth and talent can procure. In Confirmation we receive the fulness of His gifts, and a title to those actual graces which we need day by day in the conflict against the devil, the world, and the flesh. The saints realised so vividly the nothingness of the things of earth, and the value of time which, rightly used, procures

an eternity of bliss. They were all distinguished by an intense horror of sin, an ardent love of the Cross of Christ, and a burning zeal for souls. "Things are not what they seem." The supernatural sense, so to say, and the grace to penetrate below the surface, can only come from the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. He distributes His gifts as He pleases. "*The same spirit worketh, dividing to every man according as He will.*" We know that each receives those graces which are most necessary—graces of sanctification, which enable us to perform our daily duties, and to fulfil a special office—for God never gives us a command without at the same time giving us the strength necessary to obey.

When we are in sorrow because God has called a dear one hence, the burden of grief is lightened, for the Holy Spirit enables us to realise that the one we mourn is "*not lost but gone before.*" The thought of eternity, which we hope to spend with those whom we have loved, helps us to bear the separation, which is but temporary. By the help of the Holy Ghost we penetrate the meaning of the Beatitude, "*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" These words are familiar enough; but only when a special grace is vouchsafed, do we grasp the hidden meaning, and learn by experience, that the cross is a blessing in disguise. Perhaps the world is a great temptation to us, we are easily caught by its glare and tinsel, and tempted to plunge headlong into the fascinating whirlpool. How is it that so far, we have not yielded, in spite of the hard

struggle against ourselves? Is it not because our Divine Guest, by instilling the fear of God into our minds, curbs our rashness and makes us fear our own weakness, and thus we avoid the snares? Then, as a check, He may grant us piety which prevents us from finding real happiness except in God, and with these two weapons we can fight the enemy successfully.

So, in every circumstance of our lives the Holy Ghost is our teacher, ever pointing out the right path, bringing to our remembrance the truths learnt in childhood, warning us when we are on the point of turning from the right road. He convinces us of judgment to come, and this salutary fear is a powerful safeguard. Sometimes a man has grovelled in the mire of sin, for months and years. Like the prodigal son, he has gone farther and farther from home. A pious mother or a devoted wife prays earnestly for such a one. At last the petition is granted ; a bereavement, an illness, or a mission is the means of bringing that soul back to God. Then the sinner sees the danger to which he was exposing his immortal soul. Deeply penitent, he awakes as it were from a deadly sleep, makes a good confession, and brings forth fruits worthy of repentance. What has effected this transformation? It is the work of the Holy Ghost convincing the soul of sin and of judgment.

Just as when God created the world, the Spirit of God moved over the waters, and at His command chaos gave place to order ; so in the human soul, the Holy Ghost establishes order after

the chaos of the fall. He works in each individual soul that He may perfect it for heaven, and when the last trumpet shall sound, He will accomplish His work in them : "*He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you.*" Then He will take final possession of His temple, never again to be banished by sin.

What a debt of gratitude we owe for the gift of the Holy Ghost ; and here, as ever in the matter of thanksgiving, we are unable to pay our debts. There is, however, one unequivocal way of showing that we appreciate the priceless gifts of the Spirit of Jesus, that is, by our deeds. If the Paraclete deigns to visit and dwell with us, to guide, teach, and console us, He expects certain dispositions on our part. The first of these is docility to His teaching. The still small voice will make itself heard in our hearts if only we will listen. The great evil is, not that we do not know what is right, but that we are too cowardly to do it. Constantly we have need to pray :

To Thy sweet yoke our stiff necks bow,
Warm with Thy fire our hearts of snow,
Our wandering feet repel.

If only we are faithful to the inspirations or grace, which are the expression of the will of God, we should soon be saints. When a skilled workman has a good tool, he can produce a work of art, but with a bad or imperfect instrument he can do little or nothing. So with a willing soul, the Holy

Ghost can work freely. The saints ever seconded His Divine action ; thus He perfected the work of sanctification in their souls. Often our resistance to grace comes from carelessness. At other times it is deeper seated, and we refuse to listen because some passion has mastered us, and we have not the courage to conquer self or sacrifice something for God. We make excuses and seek pretexts for our refusal ; but in the spiritual life as in the natural, " there are none so deaf as those who will not hear." With docility, therefore, we require generosity, for it often needs great courage to accomplish a self-evident duty ; but generosity has its source in love, and the Spirit of Love can, and will give the charity necessary to do His will. The Holy Ghost, too, loves a prompt obedience, for it shows true love. With the virtues of fidelity and prompt generosity we shall advance rapidly in virtue, for every good action increases our merit and strengthens the soul. But whence are we to procure these virtues ? By prayer and practice.

The Holy Ghost is the *Creator Spirit*. He can give the virtues which are lacking in our souls, and the very thought of praying for grace, is a pledge that we shall receive it, since the inspiration to do so, comes from Him. In conclusion, it is a help on the road to holiness to cultivate devotion to the Divine Paraclete. We will ask for it in the beautiful prayer of the Church.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come,
From Thy bright heavenly throne ;
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them *all* Thine own.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus sitting at table with His Apostles and saying, “*If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him to you.*”

1st Point.—The Holy Ghost is the Lord and Life-giver, the source of all our good thoughts, words, and deeds. He sanctifies us, and pleads with us when we resist.

2nd Point.—The Holy Ghost is our teacher and consoler. He imparts His sevenfold gifts, enlightens our understanding, strengthens our will.

3rd Point.—He expects docility and prompt generosity from the Christian.

Colloquy.—Thank Jesus for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Ask the Holy Spirit to descend on you. Promise fidelity to His inspirations. Ask for the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost by the intercession of Mary.

Resolution.—To be faithful to the inspirations of grace.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*Quench not the Spirit of God.*”

Prayers.—Hymn to the Holy Ghost, Our Father.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS.

How wonderfully nature reveals the infinite Wisdom of God. The seed germinates, the bud blossoms, the fruit appears. Each has its proper season, in obedience to the laws of nature. The heavenly bodies, too, reveal the truth that "order is Heaven's first law," for each planet keeps in its orbit, thus enabling the whole solar system to work harmoniously. Man's body is another proof of how Providence disposes all things with order. The blood circulates, the heart beats, the muscles contract regularly, and when man feels discomfort or pain it is a sign of disease, which is, after all, a form of disorder.

What about the powers of the soul? In God's plan all should likewise work in harmony here; but, alas! sin has destroyed the balance of man's faculties, and the many spiritual evils that surround and attack the soul, are caused by the disorder of sin. Nature obeys and glorifies the Creator, while man dares to throw down the gauntlet of defiance and challenge the Almighty. Disobedience was the cause of the fall of Adam, and multitudes are treading that same path, while thousands more are suffering in hell, the punishment of their revolt. So it has been since the fall, and God the Son contemplated the sad sight of so many human beings

frustrating the designs of God and rushing on headlong to destruction, driven by blind self-will and the enemy of mankind. In His infinite love He determined to atone for their sins by practising the virtue opposed to the vice which was ruining souls. "*For as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just.*" To obey God and thus pay our ransom was the aim Jesus set before Himself. The prophet represents Christ saying : "*Behold I come ; in the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy will, O God ; I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of My heart.*"

The programme Christ traced out for Himself, He followed faithfully from the cradle to the grave. Like Abraham, He merited the consoling promise that through Him, all nations of the earth should be blessed, because He had obeyed the voice of His Heavenly Father. In all points Christ obeyed. He ever bent to the will of God. From the first moment of His Incarnation, He cherished in His soul the sentiment which He expressed in Gethsemani, "*Not My will, but Thine be done.*" Constantly He revealed to His disciples that obedience was the mainspring of His actions. Every iota of the law was dear to Him and scrupulously fulfilled. He was ever true to His motto, "*I come to do Thy will.*" Obedience sanctified every action. It was a matter of indifference *what* He did, provided He fulfilled God's commandments. Whether the Divine will sent Him to dwell in Egypt or in Nazareth, whether it called Him to be transfigured

on Thabor or crucified on Mount Calvary, He was ever ready to accept it.

Sometimes, as when Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, God revealed His will directly ; at other times it was made known by the precepts of the Jewish law or by the commands of those to whom Jesus, as Man, was subject. Mary and Joseph claimed His obedience, just as all parents have a right to the submission of their children. When Christ worked as a carpenter, He obeyed those who employed Him ; later on he submitted even to the unjust judges and the cruel executioners. In all His actions, He looked *through the creature* and saw, in the order given, the expression of the will of God. To all who claimed His obedience He could have said, as to Pilate : “ *Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above.*” It was this powerful supernatural motive that upheld our Saviour in His awful agony in Gethsemani, when the sins of men seemed to overwhelm His all-holy soul. When He gave His back to the torment of the scourge, it was to His Heavenly Father’s will that He submitted ; and what must have been the force of that Divine obedience which enabled Jesus to stretch out His hands at the bidding of the executioners, who drove in the cruel nails. Obedience was not easy to Jesus at all times, any more than it is to us, for St. Paul says : “ *Whereas, indeed, He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*”

When he expired on the Cross, He could say in all truth, *Consummatum est.* All was accom-

plished that He had come to do. He had fulfilled God's will in a manner worthy of the Incarnate Word. That Divine will had led our Saviour through the paths of suffering and sorrow for thirty-three long years, and never had He swerved from the appointed track. Jesus was God, yet He obeyed not only His Heavenly Father, but even creatures. When we contemplate Him in the power of His tormenters, what a marvellous example of obedience He gives to us, who so often in our pride and blindness utter the defiant cry, "*I will not serve.*"

Jesus obeyed promptly ; from His earliest infancy He never counted the cost, when obedience demanded a sacrifice : exile, poverty, toil, bereavement, contradictions, and sufferings, all were welcome when God sent them. He took them as gifts from a loving Father's hand. Generosity ever gives without counting. So Jesus gave His time, energies, labours, and sufferings ; no sacrifice was too great when the will of God exacted it for the salvation of souls.

How long did this obedience last? "*Unto death, even to the death of the Cross.*" Perseverance is the consummation of all virtues ; thus obedience led our Saviour to Calvary, where His life-long sacrifice was completed. Christ had expired, His dead body hung on the Cross, but the prophecy, "*They shall look on Him whom they have pierced,*" was not yet perfectly fulfilled until the soldier came and pierced His side, and "*there flowed out blood and water.*"

Let us penetrate into the sanctuary of that

Divine Heart, and seek there, the motives that led our Saviour to practise such heroic submission for thirty-three years. The first principle was the burning love of God, united to His zeal for souls, for Jesus longed to repair the insults and outrages offered to His Heavenly Father by man's disobedience. Creatures had revolted, they had thrown off the yoke of God's commandments; and the Son of God, in expiation, submitting to all that was laid upon Him, took up the yoke of obedience as an act of reparation. How difficult we find it to bend our stubborn will, even with the example of our Saviour before our eyes! How could we have hoped ever to succeed, if we had not this Divine model of perfect submission? It needs a strong, earnest will to submit to what God orders or permits; but even that is not sufficient. The strongest will fails miserably, without the help of God. Hence Jesus suffered to merit for us the grace to obey. We show our good will, put forth our feeble efforts, and pray for strength; then God comes to our aid and does the rest for us. He is too just to command impossibilities.

What an immense encouragement it is to see that our Lord did not obey, without making a strong effort of His will. Holy Scripture reveals to us how much that Divine will cost Jesus, when He suffered His agony in Gethsemani. What must have been the anguish which wrung from the lips of our Emmanuel the heart-rending cry, "*Father, if it be possible, remove this chalice from Me!*" Then, strengthened by God, He added,

"Not My will, but Thine be done." We, too, may have our hours of inward conflict in presence of an act of obedience or submission, but Christ has merited for us the grace to accomplish it, provided we are faithful. The soul may suffer a real agony at the view of some sacrifice to be offered or endured—a loved one whom God seems about to take, an infirmity which threatens us and which only death can end. The prayer may rise to our lips, *"Remove this chalice from me"*; but if God wills that we should drink it, aided by the grace Jesus has merited for us and encouraged by His example, we shall be enabled to add, *"Not my will, but Thine be done."*

How man in his pride revolts from obedience, and to justify his rebellion against authority, calumniates this divine virtue under various specious pretexts. "Obedience is meanness, unworthy of a man, contrary to his rights, a proof of ignorance." Such is the verdict of the world, dictated by the proud spirit, who first raised the standard of revolt. Worldlings justify their want of submission by misrepresenting obedience. That man should servilely obey a fellow-creature would be degrading, but that he should obey the voice of a superior placed over him by God, is truly noble, for it shows a lively spirit of faith that can pierce the veil and see God in the superior who commands. To be subject to man for God's sake, requires a real spirit of submission and humility. It is strange that the very men, who extol military obedience, are often the first to despise submission to a spiritual superior. Clearly the devil gives a

false idea of obedience in order to discredit this virtue and to prevent men practising it.

Suppose we refuse to obey those placed over us legitimately, does it follow that we are our own masters? By no means; for if we disobey God, we follow our will, our pride, bad companions, or the devil. "*Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin unto death or of obedience unto justice?*" Again, we are told that we must "*be subject to the higher powers, and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation.*" In hell, the lost souls must obey God for all eternity, and that without merit. The Creator cannot relinquish His rights over His creatures, and these rights are indissolubly bound with our happiness, that we may yield them to Him more readily.

What are the advantages of obeying? They are numerous; and, first of all, obedience ensures our walking in the narrow way. The Christian who obeys the laws of God, the precepts of the Church, and the just commands of his lawful superiors, has constantly to conquer himself, and to practise the virtues necessary for salvation.

Faith is the obedience of the intellect to the truths which God has revealed; resignation, the submission of our will to the sorrows which God sends. Oftentimes it requires an heroic act of obedience to forgive an insult or an injury. Thus the virtues are all linked, and whoever practises generously one single virtue, gradually acquires all the others. There is no path in the spiritual

life so safe as that of obedience, because having our course mapped out for us, prevents us from being the dupes of self-love. It is a trite phrase, but, nevertheless, one we often forget, that we are our own greatest enemies. We may grasp this for others, when we fail to realise it for ourselves. There are some, perhaps, whom we could name whose career illustrates this truth. As we think of such a man and his blighted life, we say with a sigh, "He was throughout his own worst enemy."

Now nothing curbs our impetuosity and self-will so much as obedience ; like a rein, it keeps us in the right path, and when the frenzy of our wilfulness is over, we thank God for the restraint which He imposed on us, by His laws and those placed over us. Like all restraints, it must try our patience at times ; but the discipline of self-control is materially aided by the exercise of obedience. The young are specially liable to temptations of revolt against the orders of obedience. It is the natural result of inexperience and untamed passion. For them, a guiding hand is an absolute necessity, if they would walk in the narrow path that leadeth to eternal life. Age often brings experience, and in riper years we consent to be led whither naturally we would not. Looking back on the past, we see how many of our falls have had their origin in disobedience, whereas, in the beaten path of submission, "*the obedient man shall relate his victories.*" Hence this virtue is a safeguard for all, while it is one of the greatest sacrifices man can offer to God, since it includes the oblation of the one faculty which no power on earth can control.

Therefore, as St. Ignatius tells us in his letter on obedience, our sacrifice is all the more perfect, since by obedience man offers his noblest gift, and we can make no better use of our will than to submit it to our superiors for God's sake. "*To obey is better than sacrifice*" is a lesson we all need to learn more thoroughly.

For some souls this virtue has a special attraction. Often the desire to practise it more perfectly, leads a Christian to embrace the religious life, that the holocaust may be more perfect. In some orders it is the only vow which the religious make, and obedience according to the rule is made to include vows of poverty and chastity.

For all, obedience to lawful authority is a gage of eternal life. "*He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*" By our obedience we shall be judged, for our Saviour tells us, "*Not every one that saith 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, who is in heaven.*"

What further incentive do we need to encourage us to bend our stiff necks to the yoke of obedience, than the conviction that by this virtue we *imitate our Saviour*, we are certain to *please God*, to *acquire merit for heaven*, to *curb our self-will*, to *offer the greatest possible sacrifice to our Creator*, and thus *assure our blessedness throughout eternity*?

Here the question must come home to each, "How do I practise obedience? Do I obey promptly, cheerfully, generously, and constantly? Is there something *too human* in my submission; for example, do I obey a superior whom I esteem

and love, while I refuse obedience to a lawful superior for whom I have a certain antipathy? If so, then my obedience is not given to God, it is offered to a mere creature and has little or no merit. Do I shirk a positive duty, glad to avoid the occasion of making the sacrifice of my will to God? How differently our loving Saviour acted! He, the God-man, obeyed, and we creatures of clay, whom the silent tomb will soon enclose and reduce to dust, arrogantly assert our independence. What utter folly for such creatures of the day as we are, to speak of being independent. If God withdrew the air, in a few seconds we should cease to breathe. Food, drink, and shelter are conditions absolutely necessary for our existence. If the Creator took back His gifts we should no longer exist, for to His bounty we owe all. The realisation of our nothingness, helps us to practise the virtue of obedience, which requires humility as a foundation.

When must we yield up our will and obey that of another? Whenever duty calls; then we must obey, under pain of sin. At other times it is prudent to obey, especially when we are in doubt as to which path is preferable for us. In this case those placed over us have special grace to guide us aright. This applies particularly to our confessor, to whom God gives the gift of counsel for our guidance; and if we go to him in a spirit of faith, asking to know God's will through His minister, we shall not be left in doubt. To obey constantly and generously, requires no common measure of self-sacrifice; even the daily routine of life furnishes

constant occasions to practise obedience, and little acts of submission frequently repeated, lead to and are proofs of great virtue. We will struggle on and strive to conquer self-will, remembering our Lord's words: "*To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of my God.*"

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent the Child Jesus at the age of twelve at Nazareth, obedient to His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to obey God's will promptly, generously, and constantly.

1st Point.—Jesus obeyed His Heavenly Father, He submitted to the dispensations of Providence, was subject to Mary and Joseph, and to all placed over Him.

2nd Point.—Motives of Christ's obedience. His ardent charity which led Him :—

- (a) To atone for our disobedience.
- (b) To encourage and to give us an example.
- (c) To merit grace for us.

3rd Point.—Advantages of obedience. It keeps us in the right path, enables us to practise all virtues, helps us to conquer self-will, leads to certain victory, is the greatest sacrifice we can offer, and a pledge of eternal life.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for His example of obedience, and the grace He has merited for you. Make an act of contrition for your sins of dis-

obedience ; promise with His help to do better in the future. Ask Him to teach you how to obey. Ask the prayers of the "*handmaid of the Lord.*"

Resolution.—Give up your own will for the love of God [specify on what occasion].

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—" *I come to do Thy will, O God.*"

Prayers.—Our Father, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HUMILITY OF JESUS.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Thus Jesus, our God and Master, places Himself before us; we are the disciples of Him who began *"to do and to teach,"* for precept must always remain sterile unless enforced by example. He *"who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,"* stands before us as the model of humility. God and humility! What a paradox; yet Jesus has reconciled these apparent contradictions. Pride, that weed which grows so rankly in the human breast, was the cause of man's fall, and our Master willed to uproot it and to plant humility in its stead. To accomplish this, it was necessary to place before sinful humanity the pattern of perfect lowliness in all its beauty.

As in every art or science, there are successive stages to be mastered before the student can obtain proficiency, so in teaching us the virtue of humility Jesus descended by degrees, to the deepest self-abasement.

Let us follow our Master in the path of humiliation, that we may have a sincere desire to imitate Him more closely. The first step on this royal

road of the Cross, was as the stride of a giant. Jesus "for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost, and was made man."

Had He taken the angelic nature, there would still have been the infinite distance that exists between the Creator and the creature. But this was not low enough to satisfy His love of humility; He "was made man." He "*emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and was found in the habit of man.*" The Word was made flesh, and reposed in the manger at Bethlehem. Those who saw the Divine Infant looked on Him as an ordinary child, and passed by unconcerned, while the choirs of angels were gathered round in adoration, and Mary, our Mother, worshipped her God and child.

But God revealed to a few chosen souls the mystery of the Incarnation; the shepherds and the Magi came to offer their homage to our Emmanuel. Not as Adam in the prime of manhood, not as a king in royal splendour did Jesus come on earth. "*He emptied Himself*" (literally, made Himself of no account), and was content to take the form of a servant, that He might teach us how to serve. He was like unto us in all things, yet without sin; but in appearance He came as a sinful child of Adam, there was nothing exteriorly to distinguish Him from the rest of humanity. But this is only the first step on the road. How it confounds our self-sufficiency; we may well feel ashamed of our pride and presumption when we look at our

Divine copy. Already we see that *to be*, and not merely *to appear*, is truly great.

Jesus emptied Himself; poverty is the handmaid and companion of humility, so our Master deprived Himself of the wealth and splendour to which man is so attached. The Divine Exile in Egypt knew what it was to hunger, the Carpenter of Nazareth toiled in the sweat of His brow: being found in the likeness of man, He shared the common lot of the poor. An earthly monarch has need of regal insignia: the greater his wealth, the larger his empire; the more brilliant his court, the more glorious his reputation. He draws his greatness chiefly from the exterior pomp that "doth hedge in a king." All the wealth and ceremonial of the court serve as a foil to exalt the sovereign. Now look at our Divine King, His worth is in Himself, creatures can add nothing to His intrinsic attributes and perfections; and the more He abases Himself, the more we feel His greatness and are drawn towards Him.

Jesus pursues His path of humiliation; He descends to greater depths of self-abasement as the time of the Passion draws near. "*The Man of Sorrows*" became more and more "*acquainted with infirmity*." Even during His public life He was rejected by the Jews, persecuted, insulted, and calumniated.

When finally the hour came for which He longed so intensely, to what an awful depth of self-abasement did He descend. After the interior Passion in Gethsemani, the Son of God stood as a criminal at the bar of the cruel, cowardly Pilate. He was

dragged through the streets of Jerusalem to the palace of Herod, who, with all his court, mocked, derided, and set Him at nought, and finally sent Him back to Pilate clothed in the white garment of folly. In the midst of the howlings of the multitude, the scoffing of the soldiers, the blows and buffets, Jesus kept silence. His divinity was hidden that His humility might be revealed.

Have we yet reached the lowest stage of His sufferings? Alas! no. The shameful and cruel scourging, the crowning with thorns, the condemnation to death were the next steps, and through all, our Master continues to be our model of humility. Do we look at our copy when we experience a real or imaginary insult?

Barabbas is preferred to Jesus; the robber and murderer is released, and the Innocent is condemned to death. A sinful creature pronounces sentence on "*the Holy One of God.*" Bearing the weight of the heavy Cross on His bruised shoulders, and still more heavily laden with the sins of men, Jesus set forth on the road to Calvary, accompanied chiefly by his foes. Who can ever tell the depth of humiliation that our Lord endured on the *Via Dolorosa*? If He gazed at those who surrounded Him, what hatred and exultant rage He read in their eyes! What awful blasphemies assailed His ears! How He suffered in every limb; from the sole of the foot to the thorn-crowned head there was no sound place! Jesus falls, and the mob jeer at Him; "*They laughed Him to scorn,*" while the brutal soldiers drag Him up with ropes, or strike Him as He lies prostrate. He could have avoided these

falls, had He willed to use supernatural means ; but our Master wished to encourage us, to teach us how to rise after a fault, and to merit for us, the grace to stand bravely in the conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. But at what a price did He purchase this grace, and how do we utilise it ?

Jesus meets His Mother ; she loved her Son too well to be separated from Him in His Passion, and, like her Divine Son, she cherished humility, and had her share in His ignominies. Our Master would bid us learn to accept humiliation *for those we love, as well as for ourselves*, and this is often the harder lesson.

At length they reach the goal. Jesus is stripped of His garments. He stretches Himself on the Cross, and the blows of the hammer resound, while the Victim of our Redemption offers the sublime prayer, "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*" The soldiers raise the Cross, place it in the hole prepared for it. What awful torments our Lord must have suffered then ! Think also of our Blessed Mother, who "stood" there and shared His sufferings. There Jesus hangs naked, agonising, for three long hours, amid the insults of the rabble.

Is the depth of suffering reached yet ? No, there is the interior Passion. God hides Himself from His Son, who suffers without any spiritual consolation.

Three o'clock came at last ; the term of the life-long journey of humiliation was reached, and Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "*Father,*

into Thy hands I commend my spirit." And, saying this and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost. Truly, "*He had humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.*"

For two hours His dead Body hung on the Cross ; during this time the soldiers came and pierced that Divine Heart, which was so meek and lowly. The wounds of the dead never close, and that Sacred Heart remains open for all time, that we may see our model and learn to copy it. Although God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption, yet He was not spared the ignominy of the tomb. Here, as in all else except sin, He was made like unto us.

Surely we have now reached the end ; there can be no more humiliation for Jesus. It would seem so, since Christ rose victorious from the tomb, and ascended as a conqueror to the right hand of God. Yet we find our Master still practising His favourite virtue. That humility which Jesus could not find in heaven He sought on earth, and even devised a means of humbling Himself throughout all ages. In the Holy Eucharist He abides hidden under the species of bread and wine, concealing alike His divinity and His humanity. To what insults does He still expose Himself from scoffers, and careless, indifferent Christians. We might have forgotten the examples of humility Jesus gave us during His earthly life, if we had had no continuation of them. But our Lord is on every altar, living amongst us, and the tabernacle is a constant reminder to look at our copy. Notice also, how Jesus deigns to plead with His creatures to prove His rights over

them, to solicit their love : “ *Behold I stand at the door and knock.*” “ *Come unto Me, all ye that labour.*” There is no forcing man’s will, no appeal to authority.

Have we now sufficient proofs that our Master has a right to claim to be our model? Throughout the three-and-thirty years of His mortal life He practised what He taught. Ever “ *meek and lowly of heart,*” He never deviated from the path of lowliness—constantly and generously He pursued it, even when it led to Calvary.

His was no feigned humility. As God, He was equal to the Father, but as Man, none ever realised as He, what the creature owes to God and what an infinite abyss separates man from his Creator. Another source of Christ’s humility was His office of Redeemer. As such He was charged with the guilt and burden of our sins ; He humbled Himself before God in place of the sinner, with the sentiments (intensified by all His Divine knowledge) which the true penitent should feel for sin. Ignorance, and want of reflection are often the roots of our pride ; but since “ *where humility is, there is wisdom,*” Jesus being all wise, was truly humble.

Pride caused the fall of our first parents, hence humility must necessarily be the means of our salvation ; for “ *He that hath been humbled shall be in glory, and he that shall bow down his eyes, he shall be saved.*” The servant is not greater than his Master ; therefore, if Jesus, by humiliation, purchased our salvation, there can be no other means for us to secure it.

The kingdom of heaven is promised to the poor in spirit, that is, to the meek and lowly of heart. Our Master has practised humility not only to give us a model, but also in order that He might merit for us the grace to imitate His example. This sublime lesson is too difficult for man to grasp, unless he be specially assisted by Divine aid. Even now, with the life of Christ before us, with the examples of the saints, and the aid of the sacraments, what a hard task it is ! What would it have been without these helps ?

There is no salvation without humility ; it is the virtue by which we become like to Christ, to whose image, God wills we should be conformed. In Holy Scripture this truth is clearly put before us. "*Pride goeth before destruction ; and the spirit is lifted up before a fall.*" God resists the proud, while He gives grace to the humble. Thus, by showing us the beauty of humility, by holding out its rewards to our gaze, and by threatening those who are proud, our Heavenly Master now guides, now urges his dull pupils on, to acquire this beautiful virtue, without which none can enter heaven.

Like all other virtues, meekness and lowliness have their reward a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting. Jesus holds out this encouragement when He bids us practise them : "*Ye shall find rest unto your souls.*" Rest and peace ! how much we need these gifts as we travel through the turmoil of life. If we are practical Catholics, if we are striving to serve God generously, and still more if we are called to

practise the counsels of perfection, we must needs often feel weary in the life-long combat. Peace is necessary for all ; it enables us to fight calmly and confidently, to accept sorrows from the hand of God, to draw up our plan of campaign. God's promise is formal. *For thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel : " If you return and be quiet you shall be saved ; in silence, and in hope shall your strength be."* Humility procures us this peace, for it leads us to distrust self, and to lean with assurance on the Everlasting Arms.

In lowliness we find our true happiness ; "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land,*" that is, the hearts of all in this world and the kingdom of heaven hereafter. All men admire humility, even those who have not the courage to practise it. It disarms an enemy and strikes a deadly blow at envy ; it is ever the soft answer that turneth away wrath, but that soft answer presupposes meekness. Above all, humility attracts God into the soul as the magnet attracts steel. It was this virtue in Mary, together with her Immaculate Conception, which caused Jesus to choose her for His Mother. *With the humble, God's gifts are in surety*, and thus God could give His saints the power of working even miracles. He knew they would not attribute these gifts to themselves, whereas the proud wrest even the natural gifts of God to their own destruction.

Peace of soul, happiness here and hereafter, the possession of the love of God and man, such are the precious fruits of humility. Who would not admire this virtue which is so amiable in itself?

But admiration alone will not suffice ; the question is, " How do we stand as regards humility ? " We have all need to acquire it ; perhaps many years have passed over our heads and we are still only learning its alphabet. There are probably two reasons for this : we have not been sufficiently in earnest ; we have not set about obtaining it in the right way. The first means is prayer. Do we pray for humility, and do we realise what we are to expect when we say from the depths of our hearts, " O God, make me humble " ? Earnest prayer is the first condition for acquiring any virtue, for God only gives His graces to those who feel the need of them.

Suppose, reader, that you have prayed for humility ; you felt your need of it and your heart was in unison with your lips. How was your prayer answered ? Look back, and it seems, perhaps, as though the more you prayed to be humble, the prouder you were. This does not prove God left your petition unanswered, it simply means that He furnished you some humiliations, some occasions to exercise the virtue of humility. He is a Master. He treats us as His pupils ; to teach any science no master contents himself with merely laying down principles. So it is with the virtues. Go on praying bravely for humility, and be prepared for the consequences, viz., occasions to conquer your pride, and the strength to do so. True, we sometimes do fall oftener after such a prayer, perhaps because it is necessary that our Divine Master should show us our need of this virtue. There are abundant opportunities of self-abasement, and we

can always humble ourselves under the hand of God. Our sins are a fruitful source of humiliation, and if each fall left us more humble, we should soon be saints.

It is often necessary to "assume a virtue if you have it not." To stifle the cries of wounded self-love, to keep back a sarcastic reply, a rebellious answer, a vain boast; in a word, to appear calm exteriorly, while inwardly the storm of passion or pride is raging, this self-control is a proof of solid virtue which does not consist in *not feeling* the force of passion, but *in subduing* it. This is the passive side only. To enter the lists, to combat actively is harder still: to make an apology, to do a good turn for some one who has hurt our feelings, to admit candidly that we have blundered, is to carry the war into the enemy's camp; and if we profit by these opportunities, they are the steps that, with God's grace, lead to humility.

The best way to combat pride is to see what form it takes and to attack that branch first. This is a matter of self-examination, and it is not difficult to find the weak point; our ordinary confessions reveal it enough. God's grace, seconded by a generous will, at least weakens the enemy and enables us to make progress. It is essential to realise that we have undertaken a guerilla warfare, likely to last our lifetime, and that we are ever liable to be surprised by fresh tactics of the enemy. This prevents discouragement, which is as great a foe as the devil himself, for a despondent soul lets its weapons rust, and abandons itself to the enemy. In proportion as we advance in humility we shall

be full of confidence in God; to know God and to distrust self are great means of spiritual progress; hence, to pursue humility courageously is at once the fruit of humility, while it strengthens us in that virtue.

To be humble, therefore, we must pray, grasp the occasions of making acts of humility, either exterior or interior, and profit by our falls to advance in self-knowledge. One more powerful incentive remains—that is, often to look at our Divine Copy, Jesus. When we are tempted to sin, when the struggle seems beyond our strength, when we feel inclined to give up the combat, let us look at Jesus, our Model, and breathe an earnest prayer for help. Mary, our dear Mother, whose imitation of her Divine Son was so perfect, will assist us in the hour of trial. Life is brighter, virtue easier to the Christian who, laden with his cross, walks in the narrow path, *looking unto Jesus.*”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus in the midst of His Apostles teaching them. As you kneel in spirit at the Master's feet, listen to His Divine words: “*Learn of Me, because I am meek and lowly of heart.*”

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to learn the difficult lesson of humility and to practise it.

1st Point.—Jesus' life was a series of humiliations. From the first moment of the Incarnation to

His death on the Cross, He descended to the lowest depths of humility, and even now humbles Himself in the Holy Eucharist.

2nd Point.—Sources of Christ's humility :

(a) His manhood, by which He was inferior to the Father.

(b) His office of Redeemer, by which He took the sinner's place.

3rd Point.—Our Lord has merited for us the grace to be humble. Humility brings us peace of soul and attracts God. To obtain this virtue, we must pray and profit by the occasions of practising it.

Colloquy.—Thank our Master for His lessons, for His patience with us in the past. Ask for grace to do better, to see *what form* our pride takes, to profit by the occasions of humbling ourselves.

Resolution.—To keep silence when pride, wounded feelings, or vanity would have us speak.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—"Learn of Me, because I am meek and lowly of heart."

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SILENCE OF JESUS.

"But Jesus gave him no answer." These words bring before us one of the scenes of our Saviour's Passion. Jesus, the Lamb of God, stood bound before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, who had caused Him to come forth, "*bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.*" After the terrible torture of the scourging, the cruel judge had pointed Him out to the people, saying, "*Behold the man,*" hoping that the Jews might be satisfied when they saw our Saviour in such a pitiable condition. But the sight of their Victim seemed only to increase their thirst for blood, and on all sides the cry arose, "*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*" In vain the weak, time-serving judge declared Jesus to be innocent. The clamour for blood increased. All this time Jesus gave no answer, and His very silence alarmed Pilate the more. It was such a total contrast to the conduct of ordinary men under the circumstances. The silence of Jesus during His Passion is a wonderful lesson for us, and even a brief meditation on our Saviour's suffering in silence, will enable us to realise something of His infinite love, and encourage us to imitate the Divine example.

Jesus was silent under insult, calumny, injustice, and the most extreme physical and mental suffering.

Since man may be called to suffer any one, or several of these trials, our Master willed to teach us how to bear them. Our Saviour was silent under insult. When at the court of Herod, the king himself setting the example, He was treated as a madman, blindfolded, buffeted, and spat upon. The whole cohort of soldiers set the Son of God at naught. They mocked and derided His royalty, they bowed the knee in derision, and the whole time Jesus was silent. Not one word did He utter before Herod. Our Saviour was then sent through the streets of Jerusalem, clad in a white robe. The soldiers hurried Him along brutally, amidst the jeers of the continually increasing crowd. In that mob there were, perhaps, many whom Jesus had healed, many to whom He had restored health, speech, or sight, or whom He had supplied with food in the desert. Jesus did not reproach them throughout this fearful ordeal, but kept silence. To the calumnies He answered not a word. Even the judge was obliged to declare Him innocent. The witnesses contradicted each other ; their testimony did not agree. Jesus heard them accuse Him of threatening to destroy the Temple, of stirring up the people to sedition, of refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar, and teaching that to pay such tribute was unlawful. How easily He could have refuted these calumnies and silenced His enemies, as He had so often done of old. But now it was their hour, and the triumph of the powers of darkness. To all these false accusations He gave no answer.

What terrible injustice the Lamb of God suffered

at the hands of His enemies. He was scourged before being condemned ; Barabbas, a murderer, was preferred to Him whom Pilate himself declared to be innocent. By a refinement of cruelty He was forced to carry the Cross on His bruised shoulders, and while tradition represents the thieves as tied to their crosses, our Saviour was nailed to His. Crucifixion was the punishment of the blackest crimes, reserved for criminals and slaves. Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God, but He had taken upon Himself the sins of the world ; hence there was no word of reproach, no answer fell from His lips. In silence He bore all, that He might teach us to suffer and to merit the beatitude promised to those who are persecuted for His sake.

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’s sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.”

The ingratitude of those whom He had benefited, the flight of His Apostles, the fickleness of the mob met with no reproach from our Lord. The crowning with thorns, the scourging, the torment of the sharp nails as they entered His Divine hands, all was suffered in silence ; neither mental nor physical suffering wrung one complaint from our Lord. He was the Victim laden with our sins, and to expiate our rebellious murmurings, Jesus kept silence.

What heroism it needed to suffer thus—especially when we consider that Jesus was God, that He

could have crushed His enemies with a glance or a word, as He did in the Garden of Olives. Had He allowed His human soul to contemplate the beatific vision, all pain of soul and body would have been annihilated ; but our Saviour knew that we could never use supernatural means, except prayer, to relieve ourselves when anguish floods our souls with its mighty waters. He willed suffering in all its stern reality ; hence His soul was, as it were, separated from God throughout the bitter Passion, that He might drink the awful chalice to the dregs.

As we contemplate our Saviour standing in silence, whilst enduring such interior and exterior anguish as surpassed all that human beings ever have endured or ever could endure, involuntarily the words of Holy Scripture rise to our mind : *“ He was offered, because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth. He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb as a lamb before its shearers, and He shall not open His mouth.”*

This prophecy Jesus accomplished. The prophet had typified Him as a lamb, and the precursor pointed out Jesus as *“ the Lamb of God,”* and even in heaven, throughout eternity, He will bear that title. St. John the Evangelist was privileged to see in heaven *“ A Lamb, as it were slain,”* and he tells us : *“ I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb . . . for the glory of God hath enlightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.”* To those who are undefiled and are *“ written in the book of life*

of the Lamb," it will be granted to worship there and to follow the "*Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb.*" This beautiful title of "the Lamb" brings out our Lord's gentleness and meekness, while at the same time we see another prophecy of Isaias fulfilled: "*He shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear His voice in the street.*"

The silence of our Saviour during His Passion was included in the "*Consummatum est*" which He uttered on the Cross when His spirit went forth to God. The prophecies were accomplished, Jesus has fulfilled His Father's will to the last iota.

As Jesus stood before His judges with all the burden of our sins weighing on His holy Soul, the humiliations and insults heaped on Him by the chief priests, the unjust judges, and the rabble were accepted by Him as due to our sins, which He had taken on Himself. We had deserved to suffer, but the Lamb of God stood there in our place and accepted the punishment in our stead. This gives us the clue to our Master's silence. It was the fruit of burning love for man and of His humility. That flame of divine charity ever burnt in the Sacred Heart and prompted Him to save man at the price of death, even the death of the Cross. Humility was the cherished virtue of Jesus, that virtue which puts the creature in his proper place with regard to God. The Son of God stood in the place of sinful humanity; hence he humbled Himself even to such an ignominious death.

His was the silence of a friend who never be-

trays. He took all as due to Himself ; only God and our Blessed Mother knew that He was the Victim of our salvation. Jesus would have remembered the inspired precept, "*Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience,*" and divinely He accomplished it.

If silence is more eloquent than words, what an example of divine eloquence Christ gives us as He stands before Pilate. Our Lord's silence, His majesty and meekness combined, alarm that cruel judge far more than words.

God is the avenger of the innocent, and to His Heavenly Father our Saviour confided His cause, content to suffer in silence that He might atone for our many and grievous sins of the tongue.

Silence proves depth of sorrow. As long as a man can express what he suffers and can speak freely of it, his anguish is not very deep. Strong emotion always masters a man and renders him speechless. We have all constantly experienced this. There was no sorrow like unto that which our Saviour endured, hence His silence gives us a faint idea of the depth of His agony. These few thoughts have brought before us something of the heroism of the silence of Jesus. We have seen that its sources were charity and humility ; let us now see how we practise this virtue.

The "unruly member" is hard to govern ; only the perfect man, "*who offendeth not in word,*" accomplishes the difficult task : yet, as Christians, we must strive to obey the apostolic precept, "*Let him refrain his tongue from evil.*" St. James

gives us some terrible truths about the tongue when he calls it "*a fire, a world of iniquity . . . being set on fire by hell,*" "*an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison.*" As we look on our past life, how many sins we have committed with our tongues. It has betrayed our pride. We have boasted of our deeds, good or bad; we have revealed a stubborn will, an independent spirit. Vanity has led us to draw attention to self, to strive to attain the first place, to throw our neighbours in the shade. At other times our tongues have been the organ of selfishness, ever ready to grumble at the least inconvenience, to secure our ease and comfort at the expense of others.

Perhaps jealousy is one of our defects; then the tongue is guilty of detraction and murmuring, and, prompted by anger, gives way to a torrent of sinful, uncharitable, and passionate words. Oftener still, want of charity leads us to misuse our tongue by making unkind remarks, wilful misinterpretation of our neighbour's conduct and cutting observations. Surely, on looking back, we have all need to make a sincere act of contrition for our sins of word. How earnestly should we pray, "*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round my lips.*"

How often we have forgotten to look at our Model, as He stood silently listening to calumny and insult, while a simple remark, a bare suspicion called forth from us a torrent of words in which sin was not wanting. We excuse ourselves even before others accuse us, thus often betraying our guilt. As Christians we are told *to rejoice* when men

shall say all manner of evil falsely against us for our Master's sake. Far from rejoicing, do we support it patiently? Are we ready to forget and forgive?

Suppose for a moment that all the copies of Holy Scripture were destroyed, and that an intelligent heathen were to attempt to reproduce the Christian code by studying it as exemplified in the conduct of many so-called practical Catholics, would he ever guess from these *data* that our Divine Master bids us forgive injuries and keep silence when calumniated—nay, further, that we are commanded to rejoice in view of the reward in heaven? It is to be feared that he would not. Notice that it is the tongue which is always the ready instrument of our indignation and resentment. But, reader, you object—"this is a high standard." True, yet it is the one given us by our Master, who bids us to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. At least, when we see the true ideal of Christian perfection we can profit by the sight to humble ourselves at our shortcomings, and resolve to amend. Let us therefore learn, as we gaze on our Divine Master, to keep back the angry reply and to accept a just rebuke. It will be one step on the path of holiness, and will lead to something higher if only we are faithful to God's grace, which never fails us in the hour of trial.

If for "*every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment,*" how shall we justify the many sinful words which we have uttered? How it would check us

if we gazed oftener on our Saviour standing in silence before an earthly tribunal. As we contemplate Him there, the divine words come home to each, "*By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*"

Besides this exterior silence there is the *interior spirit of silence* and submission to God. Without speaking one word, the soul may remain enveloped in a black cloud of melancholy, communing with self or the devil ; and this inward conversation may take various shapes. A common one is to waste hours in pitying self, to brood over our trials, to compare them with those of others, with the foregone conclusion that our crosses far exceed those of our neighbours individually or collectively. Self-love is eloquent, and, like a good orator, has the power of enforcing its side of the question. Imagination magnifies difficulties, and the more we brood over them the thicker the fog becomes. What results from this self-introspection? What happens when maudlin self-pity rules a soul? All energy is sapped, the joys of life are blotted out, as a dense fog keeps out the sun's rays. In proportion as we indulge in this inward colloquy concerning our trials and grievances, do we weaken our soul and increase our difficulties. Not only is life a burden to ourselves, but we render those, with whom we live, miserable. This introspection is sure to produce murmuring and rebellion against the will of God. We may not directly accuse our Heavenly Father, but we blame creatures, we criticise superiors, and vent our indignation on the instrument, forgetting that no trial can touch us

without God's command or permission. Shall we fear the arrow from a Father's hand ; will He let it pierce our heart ? Interior silence is nothing less than the perfect submission of the human will to God, the *fiat* of the Christian who, with a true spirit of faith, can say to each sorrow of life as it presents itself, "*Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above.*"

How can we attain this degree of perfection ? By cutting short these dangerous interior conversations, and by turning away thoughts from self. Let us think rather of the joys of life that God showers upon us, and try to help our neighbours. Self is a disagreeable companion to contemplate ; it is a thousand times better to gaze at our Model, and in His light we shall see light.

The silence of Jesus ! What a vista it opens out, and how we need to study and imitate our Master. The ideal is before us, and at least to have gazed at it attentively for a brief space, must have humbled us in our sinfulness and nothingness at the sight of our imperfections.

There is yet time to retrieve the past, and the steps are clearly marked out. We must first keep back all sinful words, then strive to be patient and silent under persecution, and finally struggle against our memory, imagination, and intellect, when it would lead us from God. This programme is not easy. It will need earnest prayer, an energetic will, constant vigilance, aided by the grace of God to accomplish it.

Our life's work is there before us. Need this dismay us ? No, for since, "*If any man offend*

not in word the same is a perfect man," we shall be prepared, in proportion as we advance in virtue, to respond joyfully when the cry shall sound, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent our Lord standing in silence before Pilate.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to imitate His example.

1st Point.—Jesus kept silence under :—

- (a) Insult from the highest and lowest.
- (b) Calumny and misrepresentation.
- (c) Injustice.

2nd Point.—The silence of Jesus was :—

- (a) The fulfilment of a prophecy.
- (b) A proof of love and humility.
- (c) The faith of a friend who never betrays.
- (d) An atonement for our sins.

3rd Point.—We should keep silence lest our tongue betray :—

- (a) Pride, selfishness, jealousy.
- (b) Our good deeds or our grievances.
- (c) We should keep silence *interiorly* by avoiding self-pity, murmuring, criticism, etc.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for the example He has given you. Ask for grace to imitate it ;

humble yourself for all your sins of the tongue and promise amendment.

Resolution.—To keep silence when the tongue would lead us into sin.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—"Jesus held His peace."

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE POVERTY OF JESUS.

“JESUS, Father of the poor, have mercy upon us.”
“Through Thy faintness and weariness : through Thy labours, Jesus deliver us.” These words bring before us a picture of our Lord in His human life on earth, when as a humble artisan He toiled for daily bread. The love of riches, either material or intellectual, is one of the commonest snares of the devil ; it has ruined and is ruining thousands.

Christ came on earth not only to redeem mankind, but also to give them an example ; hence He led a life of poverty and humiliation in order to teach man to be detached from this world. If we trace the footsteps of Christ from the cradle to the grave, we shall see how utterly He deprived Himself of all which we consider so absolutely necessary for our ease and comfort. He came into this world as the child of a poor carpenter. Mary brought forth her first-born in a stable, and His cradle was a manger. The poorest beggar could not have less.

When Jesus was presented in the Temple, His parents made the offering usual for the poor—two turtle doves, but at least Joseph had a humble roof to shelter the Divine Infant at Nazareth, and they could return there after the Purification. God willed otherwise, for the prophecy,

"Out of Egypt have I called My Son," had to be fulfilled. The angel, therefore, was sent to bid the Holy Family fly into Egypt. Just during those years when the tender babe needed a sheltering roof, came the long journey through the desert, when every comfort was lacking, and the sojourn in Egypt which was prolonged, according to tradition, for seven weary years. During this time we may feel assured that Joseph often had a hard struggle to procure daily bread for Jesus and Mary. The Egyptians, unlike the Jews, were not a hospitable race, and Joseph probably knew neither their language nor their methods of carpentry, and hence must have had difficulty in obtaining work. Mary suffered all this patiently, feeling privation far more for her Son and her spouse than for herself; while St. Joseph felt a keen pang when he could not procure the bare necessities of life for those committed to his care.

Truly it has been said, "Poverty is the only load which is the heavier the more loved ones there are to help in supporting it."

An ordinary infant is unconscious of what is passing, poverty and riches are alike to it during its tender years; true it cries when it feels the sensation of hunger or cold, but there is no reflection to forestall the pain, or memory to recall it; neither can the child realise the sufferings of its parents. With our Infant Saviour it was otherwise; having the full use of His human reason, He knew what was passing around Him and shared the sorrows of Mary and Joseph.

At last the long years were over, and the Holy Family returned to Nazareth. Doubtless, Joseph found it difficult at first to procure employment, for others must have taken his place during his long absence. At least, Mary and Joseph were now under their own roof. They lived frugally, their clothing was of the poorest. Joseph provided the daily bread by his industry. Mary accomplished her household duties and tended the Infant Saviour, who, as He advanced in years, helped His Blessed Mother, as ordinary children assist their parents. We may feel certain that the pictures which represent the Child Jesus sweeping the workshop, fetching water, or performing some other menial office, are not mere pious fancies. Mary trained Jesus to work as an artizan's son; there was no idleness at Nazareth, for the poor cannot afford to lose time, and the Holy Family lived a life of poverty.

Jesus grew up, and the time came when He had to learn a trade. This was obligatory for every Jewish child, rich or poor. There is a pious tradition that St. Joseph died before our Lord began His public life; and then it was a necessity for Christ to work hard, that He might provide for the wants of the household in the sweat of His brow, and give us an example of assiduous labour.

The day dawned, when our Saviour was to begin His public life. Here other privations were in store. He left the roof which had sheltered Him for so many years, and was henceforth utterly dependent on charity for food and shelter.

Jesus, before He commenced His ministry, went

forth into the desert, and there wrestled with the tempter for forty days, during which time He fasted and had not even a shelter from the wild beasts, that prowled about seeking their prey. At the expiration of this time God supplied the wants of His Son. After the temptation, Christ gradually gathered around Him His twelve Apostles. How often the little band lacked food and shelter. They knew what it was to hunger and thirst. Frequently the canopy of heaven was their only roof.

Jesus did not disguise His poverty from those who asked to follow Him. Thus, to a certain scribe who wished to become our Lord's disciple, He said: "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.*" Like the poor, He toiled incessantly; and though He worked miracles to supply the wants of others, He never alleviated His own sufferings by supernatural means. Labour, suffering, and privation were the constant companions of our beloved Saviour.

Judas kept the bag which contained the alms bestowed on our Lord and the Apostles; but they were not always applied for relieving their necessities, for Holy Scripture hints that Judas reserved a portion for himself, when it tells us that he was a thief, and, "*Having a purse, carried the things that were put therein.*"

How the angels must have gazed in wondering awe and adoration on our Divine Saviour as He sat by the well, hungry, weary, and footsore. What a mystery these sufferings and privations must have presented to them!

We pass on to the hour of the Passion. What absolute poverty our Lord experienced then. The room in which He celebrated the Holy Eucharist was hired ; it neither belonged to our Lord nor to His Apostles. The clothes He wore were assigned to the soldiers, who cast lots for them ; the tomb which received Him was the gift of a disciple. Thus, from the cradle to the grave, Christ gave us an example of the most rigid poverty. Not only He laboured and hungered like the poor, but He made Himself one of them. His Apostles were illiterate fishermen, with the exception of St. Matthew, who was a despised publican. He worked with them, supported their lack of education and refinement. His love was not diminished by their want of cultivation. That love led Him to accept poverty, with all its consequences ; and when hunger, labour, and weariness made themselves felt, He recognised and welcomed them as inseparable companions of poverty.

Did our Lord's poverty finish with His earthly life? In a certain sense, no ; for beneath the sacramental veils, Jesus still hides Himself under the humble appearances of bread and wine. There is nothing to dazzle the senses, no exterior glory, nothing to attract attention. In the tabernacle, what a miserable dwelling our Lord frequently has ! Often God's church is far poorer than our dwelling. As long as the world lasts, our Saviour will continue to hide Himself under the Eucharistic veils which recall the poverty of the crib.

As we meditate on our Lord's poverty, the question arises, " Why did He make this choice ? "

Doubtless, the chief reason was, that He might expiate the sins which man had committed through love of riches, ease, and comfort. Secondly, to teach us to detach ourselves from the things which pass, and to show us their nothingness. St. Paul explains this reason clearly when he tells us : “ *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich.*” And in another place he teaches the same doctrine : “ *In all things you are made rich in Him.*”

All our Saviour’s life was guided by infinite love, and love must ever give in proportion to its intensity. By His poverty we are enriched. He divested Himself of the glory of heaven that we might one day enjoy it ; He emptied Himself of all the exterior splendour due to His majesty, that we might learn to value true greatness and despise the vain glory of earth. By his hunger and thirst He atoned for our sins of intemperance ; by His labours and sufferings He satisfied God for our sins of sloth and worldliness.

The example is before us, we are familiar enough with the life of our Saviour ; the question is, “ How does this knowledge affect our daily actions ? ” What would He have us learn, and how are we to imitate Him ? One important lesson is to love and honour the poor, as the representatives of Christ and His legacy to us. Of old, God bade the Israelites succour the poor, for we read : “ *There shall not be wanting poor in the land of thy habitation ; therefore, I command thee to open thy hand to the needy and poor brother*

that dwelleth in the land." When our Saviour came on earth, He renewed this injunction, saying, "*The poor ye have always with you.*"

The poor are His special care, and the Church, imitating her Divine Master, has ever succoured and honoured them. It is the privilege of those, to whom God has given this world's goods to assist the needy, and for a loving unselfish heart there is no purer joy. A kind word, an alms, or some personal service done for our poorer brethren is a service rendered to Christ Himself in their person. "*Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver Him in the evil day.*"

Thus God ever makes it our interest to cherish those who are stricken by poverty. But we must remember that it is a privilege to minister to them, not an onerous obligation. We have not fulfilled our duty towards the poor merely by contributing a small alms *which we do not miss*, or by performing some act of charity in a haughty, condescending manner. It is we, who are honoured in being allowed to minister to their needs, and we, who draw the greater advantage from our alms. When Christ was on earth, the poor gathered round Him; they felt a divine attraction which drew them to Him, and assured them that He sympathised in their affliction. They seemed to know intuitively, that they were the cherished portion of the flock.

The saints followed in their Master's steps, and thousands of heroic examples, in favour of the afflicted and hungry, might be cited. St. Vincent

of Paul sold himself as a slave in order to ransom a captive ; Father Damien gave his life for the lepers ; and daily our priests and missionaries risk their lives in attending the sick. Epidemics have called forth thousands of generous sacrifices, and there are many martyrs of charity among the white-robed throng. “ *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*”

Tradition tells us that our Lord Himself has sometimes deigned to take the form of a beggar and to solicit alms. It was thus that St. Martin ministered to our Saviour disguised as a mendicant. The sincere Christian realises the true dignity of those who solicit his help for the love of God, St. James tells us, “ *God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him.*” Let us ask ourselves how far we accomplish our duties towards the poor, and whether we could not with a little effort, do more to brighten their lives and alleviate their sufferings.

Jesus would also teach us to detach our hearts from the riches of earth. Constantly Holy Scripture bids us to hate the world and beware of its vain pomps. “ *Love not the world.*” “ *The whole world lieth in wickedness.*” “ *I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil.*” “ *Love not the world nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.*” The pleasures of life are so alluring, they appeal so powerfully to the craving

which we all have for happiness, that souls are drawn headlong into this vortex, which has entrained thousands into eternal ruin. The world is a liar, it promises what it cannot give; and those who have drunk its cup to the dregs, and tasted all its so-called pleasures, have been forced to cry out with Solomon, "*Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.*" The votaries of the world are numerous; they are held by its glare and tinsel, and many a nominal Catholic makes an idol of this world and the luxuries which money procures. Shall we, with the warning ringing in our ears, "*Love not the world,*" make wealth or ambition the one object of our life? Rather let us pray, "*Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessities of life.*" If we attach our hearts to money and worldly pleasures, how can we escape Christ's anathema, "*Woe to you, rich*"?

There is another poverty the Master would have us learn when He says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" God may have given us this world's wealth, but we can still be poor in spirit; that is, we can be humble and detached from them by the help of God's grace. We may be more or less alone in the world, and the poverty we are then called to endure, is want of affection. Isolation is a very real poverty, and a heavy cross to many. Others may be intellectually poor, and this may render their career in life more difficult. From whatever source our poverty comes, the beatitude remains true, "*Blessed are the poor,*" provided we are con-

tent with the gifts which God has given, resigned, if not glad, to forego those which He sees fit in His wisdom to refuse. In heaven, we shall all be rich in all that can satisfy our heart's longing, and no desire will be unaccomplished. Jesus, our Master, was poor on earth ; now in Heaven, He is infinitely rich for all eternity, and we are destined, after having shared His poverty, to partake of His glory. This should encourage us to live in the spirit of the *Sursum corda*, and to bear the tribulations and sufferings which endure but for a moment, when compared with the blessedness of eternity.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent the Son of Man, kneeling in the dead of night on the mountain side ; He had not where to lay His head.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to esteem the things of earth at their real value ; as a means, not an end.

1st Point.—Our Lord practised poverty as a child in Bethlehem, Egypt, and in Nazareth.

2nd Point.—He was poor during His public life, often lacking food and shelter. He worked no miracles to relieve His own wants. His companions were poor men.

3rd Point.—Our Saviour practised poverty :—

(a) To atone for our love of ease and comfort.

(b) To teach us to be detached from earthly things.

Colloquy.—Ask for the grace of poverty of spirit,

for light to see that neither riches nor creatures can satisfy the soul, to be content with our lot, to help others as far as we can.

Resolution. — Cheerfully accept any sacrifice poverty may impose, or give up anything to which you are inordinately attached.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“ *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God*”; or *Sursum corda.*

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS.

GOD, our Father, is all perfect, and His attributes are infinite ; we see His Divine power in the works of creation, and Holy Scripture reveals to us the Divine attributes, as His eternity, omniscience, justice, and love. Of all these perfections, the one He seems to prefer to exercise is mercy, since Jesus came on earth to reveal to us the love of the Eternal Father.

St. John tells us, "*He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.*" Our Lord, faithful to His mission, went about doing good. The Word of God expressed His Heavenly Father's thoughts and feelings towards sinful humanity. Hence we find the characteristic virtue which Jesus loved most to practise was that of mercy. Whoever had such "*compassion on them that are ignorant and that err*" as our Saviour? "*We have not a high priest, that cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted like as we are, without sin.*" Nor was His compassion a mere sentiment ; no misery of humanity ever failed to appeal to His Sacred Heart, and for each and all He found alleviation, either by removing the cause or giving strength to bear the cross. Numerous loving invitations, of which Holy

Scripture reveals only a small number, fell from His sacred lips : “ *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are burdened* ” ; “ *Come ye into the desert and rest awhile.* ” All were welcome ; none could feel that he was not wanted.

Sin creates an abyss between God and man, and a guilty conscience is characterised by a certain shrinking from our Heavenly Father. Thus, Adam hid himself in the garden after his sin. It is natural for the sinner to dread the gaze of the thrice-holy God. Hence, instead of going to their Creator with confidence, humility, and contrition, the prodigal children of Adam try to avoid even the thought of Him. Urged on by the devil, the sinner turns aside into the path of diffidence, which borders on that of despair, into which the evil one hopes to lead his victim.

Our Lord knows what havoc this temptation works in the souls of men ; hence, in His tender love, He is ever welcoming the penitent. How often the loving word, “ *Come,* ” prefaced the pleadings of our merciful Saviour. None ever pitied the sinner as He, for no creature could ever realise what the soul loses, who is deprived of the vision of God for all eternity. The woman whom the Pharisees brought to our Lord and accused of adultery, heard from our Saviour the consoling words, “ *Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace.* ” The dying thief uttered one prayer, and he who but a short time before had blasphemed Jesus received the consoling promise, “ *This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* ” St. Mary Magdalen, St. Peter, St. Thomas, the paralytic,

all came to Him with confidence and went away absolved.

The Jews refused to receive our Lord, they rejected His mercy, and Jesus wept over them. Truly He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias: "*The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench.*" None ever came to Him seeking mercy, and went away empty. During His public life we are told, Jesus went into "*all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.*" What a beautiful picture of the infinite compassion of our Lord. He provided for the spiritual necessities of those who were too blind to come and implore pardon." They had erred from the fold, and He sent His Apostle to preach "*to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.*" Even their bodily suffering touched His Sacred Heart. He saw a great multitude and had compassion on them. He healed the sick and gave the Apostles power to do likewise. Some who were sick, He called to Him and healed. Others who were too ill to come He visited, and laid His Divine hands upon them; others, again, He invited to solicit their cure by asking if they desired to be made whole. Often He healed the sick at a distance from Him, at the intercession of their relatives. The Good Shepherd was ever ready to tend His sheep, "*to seek and save that which was lost.*" The Heavenly Physician came to cure both body and soul.

Jesus chose a life of poverty in this world

for Himself; never did He use His Divine power to satisfy His bodily wants, yet He worked miracles to supply the poor with bread. For three days a great multitude had followed Him in the desert, and "*had nothing to eat.*" Calling His disciples together He saith unto them, "*I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have been with Me three days and have nothing to eat.*" Our Saviour then provided for their wants, and twice this miracle was worked.

At the marriage feast, He delivered His host from embarrassment by changing the water into wine. But there are other crosses in life besides sickness and poverty. Anxieties, bereavements, and fears often oppress the human soul. Here again :

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows had a part.

He walked on the water and stilled the tempest to calm the fears of the Apostles. Martha and Mary sent to Him in their affliction ; and He went to them, and raised Lazarus to life. In like manner He had compassion on the widow of Nain, and restored the dead man to his mother. After our Lord's Resurrection, He appeared to His disciples, who had been toiling fruitlessly all night, and rewarded their patient labour by a miraculous draught of fishes. How many other examples of His compassion might be given, and many others will be revealed to us hereafter ; for but a few are recorded in Scripture, in comparison with all our Lord did to relieve and comfort those in distress.

As we contemplate Him receiving the penitent

sinner, bending over the couch of the sick and succouring all who suffered, it makes us feel ashamed of our want of confidence in Him. We all have our sorrows of mind or body ; often both combine to crucify us. Sometimes the sorrows and anxieties of those we love, cast a cloud over our life. At times, when the outlook is gloomiest, we are tempted to despair, forgetting that our High Priest has not changed. He is still touched with compassion for the heavy-laden and afflicted. He knows our difficulties : not one escapes His notice. Why not imitate the conduct of those who thronged around our Saviour when He trod this earth ? They approached in their distress, and were relieved ; they brought others and interceded in their behalf, and Jesus rewarded the faith of the suppliant by granting their request.

Too often, alas ! we try every other means but prayer and confidence in our Lord. These are sometimes the last to which we have recourse, because our love is cold and our faith weak. We lack that personal love of our Lord, which nourishes the flame of charity. It is impossible not to love Jesus when once we know Him, and to obtain this knowledge we must study His earthly life and His Divine attributes.

Ignorance is a fatal cause of indifference and coldness ; pride and egotism also produce the same result. We counted on self, and exposed ourselves to the occasions of sin. Then came a grievous fall, which surprised and humbled us, and for weeks perhaps we remained in that state instead of kneeling in spirit at the feet of our

Lord, and imploring His compassion by a fervent act of contrition and a good confession. When shall we learn to trust our High Priest, and to approach Him with confidence? We measure the breadth and depth of His Divine charity by the rule of our miserable human love. We cannot realise, without a special grace of God, that our sins and offences, in comparison with the ocean of Christ's compassion, are but as a single drop compared to the waters of the mighty deep. He knows the clay whereof we are formed, and our faults do not surprise Him as they do us.

Look at our inconsistency in another light : we are placed here below to glorify God. Now, who accomplishes this more effectually—the Christian who, in spite of his miseries, approaches with full confidence to the throne of grace, or he who, so to speak, sulkily remains at a distance, doubting and fearing ? To be sure of God, to feel certain that our Lord will not withdraw His Divine arms, as we throw ourselves into them, is a homage paid to the tender mercy of our Creator. That we should distrust a hard taskmaster would be perfectly natural, but to doubt the mercy of Jesus is an insult to His infinite compassion. Why not also take those we love to the feet of Jesus in the tabernacle, and plead there for them, as we should have done had we been permitted to approach Him during His mortal life? Martha and Mary sent a message to our Lord once concerning their brother : “ *Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.*” They did not even add one supplication, they merely expressed their need, content to leave the

rest to His love, and they were not disappointed. Our Lady at the marriage feast simply drew our Lord's attention to the embarrassment of their host—" *They have no wine*"—and her Divine Son worked a miracle to supply it. The saints were so confident in their dealings with God, and their hopes were never deceived.

Another lesson we learn from the compassion of Jesus is to imitate His conduct in our relations with our neighbour. To have compassion on others, means to suffer with them and thus lighten their burden. The first step towards this tender pity, is to watch over our thoughts. We are inclined to be harsh in our judgments, to condemn our neighbour in our minds, because we gain by the comparison. Evidently, to blame the conduct of another, is a delicate way of showing how differently we should have acted under the same circumstances. We make all allowance for our falls, while we seldom admit the same extenuating circumstances with regard to the faults of others.

Therefore, our first step in the direction of mercy is to interpret the conduct of others kindly, to hear both sides, and to avoid rash, unfavourable conclusions. What an outcry would be raised against a judge who, having heard the accusers, refused to listen to the accused, and condemned him thus prematurely ! Yet this is constantly our line of conduct towards our neighbour. Over and over again we have judged another hastily and uncharitably, and time has revealed our mistake ; but many like errors will only be made known, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid bare.

Just as the bud expands into the flower, so the kind thought shows itself by kind words, and we have so many opportunities of uttering them. The poorest can afford to be prodigal in this respect. After the flower comes the fruit ; thus deeds of mercy and compassion are shown to those in need for Christ's sake. A little forethought will reveal plenty of occasions of performing some spiritual or corporal work of mercy ; and the Church, in her zeal for our sanctification and the welfare of our neighbour, has attached an indulgence to each that we may be stirred up to devote ourselves to relieving our neighbour. Christ has made it our interest to help those who are in tribulation, since He takes their debt of gratitude on Himself, and is Surety for its payment. "*Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me.*"

Our days on earth may be few or many, as we count time ; and the limit is determined by God, it does not depend on us. But it does depend on us, whether our life is full or empty. If life be short, we can run a long course by our generosity in the service of God and our neighbour.

If we look back over our past years the thought must arise, "How often have I wronged my neighbour in thought, word, and deed." Yes, we all have to reproach ourselves more or less with sins against charity. Want of thought, perhaps, more than want of heart, is often the cause ; but, nevertheless, we have frequently pained others from both these causes. When we contrast our selfish forgetfulness with the infinite compassion of our Saviour, how

ashamed we feel; so, kneeling at the feet of Jesus, we will ask Him to help us to make an act of perfect contrition for the past, and promise to amend in the future. Occasions will not be wanting.

Holy Scripture tells us, "*The poor are always with you.*" All are poor in one or other respect; some lack health or wealth, others virtue or sympathy. The poverty of creatures takes numerous forms, and thus everywhere we find subjects of compassionate love and kind deeds. Is there no one, to whom we can render some service to-day, as a fruit of the lesson we now understand better than before? Suppose we look at home first, and see if there are none with whom we live whose life we can brighten. Too often, these are just the ones who get the least of our devotedness. Perhaps God has granted you this world's wealth. If so, how far are you using it for God? What poor family do you help, or could you help, at the expense of a sacrifice? When Jesus gave His time, labours, and life blood for us, shall we be content to give Him just "what is convenient," what we do not miss, of our time and wealth?

If no other occasion offers itself, we can at least offer up a prayer for the suffering and afflicted. What about the souls in purgatory? They are always grateful and have a claim on our pity. A daily prayer at least shall be the practical expression of our love. Thus, the members of Christ's Church, living or dead, give us blest occasions of imitating the tender compassion of Jesus, and thus we shall be rendered daily more conformed to His image and find mercy at the last hour, for Christ

says, in His sermon on the Mount : “ *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus healing the sick on the evening of the day on which He had cured St. Peter’s mother-in-law.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to be merciful, and to do all the good in your power.

1st Point.—Jesus loved to exercise mercy ; He had compassion on all, He sought out sinners and pardoned them, He healed bodily infirmities, fed the hungry, comforted the sorrowful.

2nd Point.—Our Lord has not changed ; hence, we should approach Him with confidence in all our trials, and plead also for those who are sorrowing.

3rd Point.—We must imitate the compassion of Jesus. To do this it is necessary to watch over our thoughts, speak kindly, and render service willingly, especially to God’s poor.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for all the times that He has had compassion on you. Ask pardon for your severity to others. Promise to repair the past. Beg of Him to show you the *root* of your want of charity.

Resolution.—Render service to-day to some one for the love of God. Seek an occasion, if none presents itself.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“ *As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.*”

Prayers.—Our Father, Act of Charity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRAYER OF JESUS.

GOD, as Creator, has a supreme right to the homage of His creatures ; He cannot abdicate this claim and leave mankind without any restraint. Such a course would be against His justice ; hence, man is bound to worship and adore the supreme Being to whom he owes his existence. But this is not the only obligation that binds man to pray : he is a weak, helpless creature ; by his own power he cannot subsist ; hence, he must present himself as a suppliant at God's throne, to implore those gifts and graces which he needs for soul and body. Prayer is, therefore, a *duty* man owes to God, and a *necessity* in order to obtain what he needs.

Jesus, our Saviour, was the Son of God ; was prayer a duty and a necessity for Him ? We know that, as God, He was ever united to His eternal Father and co-equal with Him, but touching His manhood, He was inferior to the Father, His humanity was dependent on God, and as man He had need to pray. Voluntarily Jesus had humbled Himself and taken our nature ; He had become like us in all except sin ; hence, He took our duties and obligations upon Himself, and as

man, Jesus adored the Eternal Father, and implored strength for Himself and grace for us.

Our Saviour was probably educated like all other Jewish children. The first elements were learned at a mother's knee, until the age of six; then Jewish boys were sent to school, and the whole base of their instruction was religious, until the age of ten. The Scriptures were their only textbook. Even the alphabet was sacred, because four of its letters formed the name of God. Over the principal entrance to every Jewish home some text was written containing the name of God, and each one who entered, touched that sacred Name and then kissed the finger that had touched it. The chief subject in which children were instructed was the law of God, and at the age of twelve or thirteen, each boy was presented to the doctors of the law, who questioned him concerning the duties and privileges to which circumcision admitted the Jews. If this test was satisfactorily passed the child was considered "of age," and henceforth bound to fulfil the precepts and ceremonies of the law. This throws a light on the early life of Jesus. How eagerly He must have drunk in the teaching of Mary; with what reverence He would have handled the sacred books, and touched the holy Name of God. We know that at the age of twelve Mary and Joseph took Him with them to Jerusalem, and that having lost Him for three days "*they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and answers.*" We may feel sure that during

those days, when Jesus was "*about His Father's business*," a great part of the time was spent in prayer.

As He was now of age, He faithfully performed all the obligations and attended the sacrifices in the Temple at fixed times, and also the services in the synagogue. He inaugurated His public life by fasting and praying for forty days in the dreary desert. When He had gathered a little band of faithful disciples around Him, He taught them to pray; often He prayed with and for them, passing whole nights on the bleak mountains. On the eve of His death what a sublime prayer He uttered in the Cenacle! How He poured forth His soul in prayer during the awful agony in Gethsemani, when the drops of blood trickled down on to the ground! Throughout the terrible hours of the Passion, Jesus prayed, and as the executioners drove the sharp nails through His Divine hands, He uttered no complaint, but a fervent prayer for His tormentors; "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*" The Cross was lifted up, and the Victim of our ransom, suspended between heaven and earth, in the midst of His awful torments, prayed: "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" and His soul went forth to God after having uttered the sublime act of confidence, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*" Jesus had begun His life by prayer, "*I come to do Thy will, O God*"; and by prayer He ended His earthly course. From the moment of his Incarnation, to the time when He resigned His

soul into His Father's hands, He had lived in the practice of prayer. Even when He was occupied with exterior works of charity, His Divine soul was united to God by interior recollection. He who teaches us that "*men ought always to pray,*" practised what He taught; and even now in heaven He pleads our cause, and presents His pierced hands as a memorial of His Passion. How many places were sanctified by the prayer of Jesus! Every event, joyful or sorrowful, furnished our Saviour with motives for prayer. The devil came with temptations, and Jesus foiled him with prayer "*and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*" In His necessities He prayed; and again we notice, He who bids us pray for our daily bread asked for it Himself, for Jesus ever "*began to do and to teach.*" The example preceded the precept. Whenever an important action had to be performed, such as His public mission, choosing the Apostles, or working a miracle, Jesus prayed. When He found faith and love in those to whom He ministered, He gave thanks to His Father, and each prayer answered had its adequate thanksgiving. During His suffering life, when pain and sorrow held Him in their stern grip, prayer was His resource, and He persevered in it until He sent forth His spirit. Our Saviour took all His joys and sorrows to His Father's feet.

Prayer for the Incarnate Word was not merely a duty, it was an intense longing of His soul. None can ever fathom the depth of that burning desire in the soul of Jesus, to unite Himself to His Eternal Father. The moments of communion

with God were His greatest bliss. There have been saints for whom it required an effort to turn their thoughts away from God ; such was the case with St. Aloysius Gonzaga. What must have been the attraction between the sacred humanity of Christ and His Eternal Father ?

By His frequent intercourse with God, Jesus gives us an example. As we gaze on Him, "*Who in the day of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence,*" how can we excuse ourselves from offering to God the homage of our adoration and thanksgiving ? We see our Redeemer during the agony of Gethsemani and on the Cross pleading for us, who so often neglect to pray for ourselves. As we meditate on the divine supplication of our Saviour, we may learn from Him how to worship God, for prayer must have certain qualities, without which it is worthless. How did He pray ? The text quoted above tells us, "*He was heard for His reverence.*" Jesus was the Son of God, and as such equal to the Father ; yet as man He abased Himself and worshipped with reverence. The Scriptures bid us treat God with due respect : "*let us serve, pleasing God with fear and reverence.*" Courtiers are strict about the observance of the rules of etiquette at the court of an earthly sovereign ; how much more shall we abase ourselves and pay our homage before the throne of the King of kings ?

Another quality of our Saviour's prayer was submission. He presented His petition inasmuch

as it was the will of God. "*Not My will but Thine be done.*" The Son of God prayed as a suppliant, even "*with tears*"; He humbled Himself at the mercy-seat, and this not once or twice, but constantly—daily, hourly interceding for sinful humanity; and in heaven itself He continues to be our Mediator. For Jesus is entered "*into heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us.*" There He presents His five wounds before the throne of God, and offers His Precious Blood for our salvation. Never for one instant did Jesus doubt the issue of His prayer. He knew that God the Father was faithful to His promises, and thus could say, "*Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me, and I know that Thou hearest Me always.*" This firm confidence made Him resort to God in every difficulty. He never let sufferings and trials come between Him and God; but turning these seeming obstacles into subjects of prayer, found in union with God, strength to bear the burdens of life. God heard His Son's petitions, and we notice that it was after prayer, both in the desert and in Gethsemani, that angels ministered to Christ.

We have thought for a few moments on the all-perfect prayer of Jesus, we have seen our Divine Model prostrating Himself for us before His Heavenly Father, and as we contemplate our Emmanuel we call to mind how He exhorted His disciples to pray, saying: "*After this manner pray ye*"; and then He gave them the "Our Father" as the pattern of all prayer. He bid them pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers

into the vineyard. He warned them that certain devils can only be driven out by prayer and fasting. Frequently He assured them that prayer is never unheeded by God. He multiplies metaphors to enforce this truth : *"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you."*

Prayer is the great means of salvation, and whoever prays with all sincerity is sure of salvation, for God cannot be unfaithful to His promises. Let us ask ourselves how we use this great means of obtaining eternal life ; if we profit by the permission to approach the throne of grace and present there our petitions, confident that no prayer is ever unanswered. True, we may not obtain exactly what we ask, for we may ask that which is injurious to our salvation ; but we are sure to obtain something else which is more profitable to our eternal interests.

Do we esteem prayer, and look upon it as a privilege as well as a duty ? This is the first step towards true devotion. We must grasp it in both these aspects, for at times we are dry and wooden ; prayer loses its sweetness, and we need to conquer self, to force ourselves to pray. If we feel thus we should pray as a duty ; and the disinclination does not detract from our merit, rather it increases it, when we struggle against the distaste for prayer and apply ourselves to it with all the energy of a will determined to obey God at any cost. Jesus wrestled in prayer and suffered an agony ; the disciple is not greater than his Master.

Then comes the question, Are we constant in our

practices of devotion? God should have His time daily, and also weekly. Are we faithful to morning and evening prayers? Do we try to attend a Mass on weekdays? Do we give Mary, our Mother, a daily homage? These practices are not commanded under pain of sin, but they are the daily spiritual food of a pious Catholic. We have also our weekly obligations, Sunday Mass (a whole, not a half), and further, the pious practice of attending Benediction. We are also bound to pray, before the reception of the sacraments, and afterwards to make our thanksgiving. God sends us sorrows to draw us nearer to Him; do we, on the contrary, go to creatures to be relieved of our burden? Is God our last resource only? Sickness may overtake us, and then it is essential that we should pray, and not let all our thoughts be directed to the alleviation of our bodily pains. Clearly, we cannot then say long prayers, but we can use short ejaculations, and unite our will to that of our loving Father. A bereavement rends our heart; where shall we find consolation but in God? How many fly to forbidden means of drowning sorrow, rather than to prayer and resignation to God's will! A true Christian will humbly acknowledge, "*The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*"

Are we respectful in our prayer? Do we treat God as the Sovereign Lord? Do we take a reverent posture and make the sign of the Cross with devotion? It is not advisable to take an *uncomfortable* position during prayer; as this would

be a cause of distraction ; but, on the other hand, it is a want of reverence to place ourselves in a careless, lounging attitude when addressing the King of kings.

God often exercises our confidence by deferring to answer, but this is for our advantage. Hope, like every other virtue, can only be strengthened by exercise ; and patient waiting glorifies God, gives us fresh merit, and increases our virtue. Job had this firm confidence when he said : “ *Although He should kill me yet I will trust in Him.* ” Constancy in prayer is difficult ; it presupposes courage, for often the cares of life fill our mind with distractions and render intercourse with God difficult.

We must remember that wandering thoughts are not sins, unless we willingly fix our mind on earthly objects. Above all, we must never abandon prayer on account of distractions, for this would rob us of our merit and gratify the devil. Our line of conduct should be to resist distractions calmly, and if we cannot control our thoughts, to humble ourselves by patiently bearing the inconvenience it causes. Above all, when we perceive that our thoughts are far from God, we must not lose time by retracing the path to see how we came to be thinking of this or that subject ; still less should we waste precious time in abusing ourselves for our weakness. It is more humble and profitable to resume our prayer, after making an act of contrition for any fault of negligence, if, indeed, there has been fault. Only a state of bodily weakness accounts for our distractions. They that are whole do not need a physician, but those who are sick.

Hence our sorrows and trials are an imperative reason for having recourse to God.

Since prayer is a duty, we must despise feelings, if they are a barrier in the matter; they are beyond our control. What God asks is, that we be determined, with a strong energetic will, to serve Him. If we are in earnest, if we realise how much we need the grace of God, we shall frequently turn to Him with all the energy of our soul. Jesus, our Model, has merited for us the grace to pray well. He inspires the petition that rises from the heart, and for a sincere Christian there is no happiness on earth that equals the joy which the soul finds in union with God. What earthly pleasure can be compared to the happiness of a first Communion day, a first Mass for a priest, or the day of the final vows for a religious? These are joys that are not of this world—precious moments when God communicates to the soul that peace which passes all human understanding.

Jesus has bid us remember others before the throne of grace. How far do we obey this precept? Intercessory prayer is a mighty power. God hath pledged His word to grant the petition of those who gather in His name, even though they number only two or three. Let us be unselfish, and remember the necessities of others, assured that God never forgets those who give to the needy the spiritual alms of intercessory prayer. Lastly, there is a strict duty laid upon us to thank God for all His gifts and mercies, and we all have to fulfil the obligation, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord*

thy God." Adoration is the highest prayer. It is the appropriate one to use at the Consecration of the Mass, at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, when we enter a church, and after Communion. There are so few who remember this duty, that those who are faithful to it, must be specially dear to God. Often we spend the time of prayer bemoaning our spiritual infirmities, and pitying ourselves; this self-introspection may be overdone till it weakens the soul. How much more we should glorify God if we spent our time in enumerating all the blessings we have received, and thanking Him for them. Let us try this remedy for sadness, and life will be brighter; and in proportion as we forget self and live *for God*, and *in God*, shall we become saints. Heaven will be the eternal union of the creature with the Creator, and it is meet that we should begin our apprenticeship on earth.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus in the Cenacle after the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, uttering His sublime prayer to the Eternal Father. Remember that on that occasion He prayed for you.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for the grace to learn from the example of your Master how to pray.

1st Point.—Jesus prayed throughout His earthly life

In the Temple.

In the desert.

With His disciples.

Alone on the mountain in the dead of night.

In the Cenacle.

In Gethsemani.

On the Cross.

2nd Point.—Jesus prayed because, as man, it was

(a) A duty ; a need of His soul to unite Himself to God ; a pleasure.

(b) To give us an example before giving us the precept.

3rd Point.—Jesus prayed :

With reverence.

With submission.

With humility.

With confidence.

In spite of difficulties.

Colloquy.—Thank your Heavenly Master for having taught you, by word and example, how to pray. Make an act of contrition for past negligence in prayer. Beg of Him the grace to amend.

Resolution.—See how you fail most frequently as regards prayer, and make one definite resolution to do better, and to begin to-day.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“ Lord, teach us to pray.”

Prayers.—Our Father, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MEMORY OF JESUS.

THE memory of Jesus! Who would not desire a place there? In that Divine memory all our names are engraved; and what must be the excellence of the memory which is the handmaid of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! What a good memory our dear Lord has for all we would have Him remember. Let us meditate on its faithfulness for a few minutes, that our hearts may be roused to love Him more and more.

Jesus has an excellent memory for our few imperfect attempts at good deeds. Scripture tells us how He exercised this faculty during His mortal life. When Jesus was at table in the house of Simon the Pharisee, a sinful woman, whom some think to have been St. Mary Magdalen, approached our Saviour, and, kneeling at His feet, sought pardon for a life of sin. Jesus, accepting her homage and repentance, allowed her to remain at His feet. This greatly surprised and scandalised the Pharisee, who “spoke within himself, saying: ‘*This man, if He were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner.*’” Jesus knew what uncharitable thoughts were in the mind of that proud Jew, and taught him, in the beautiful parable of the two debtors,

how God receives repentant sinners ; then He went on to justify Mary Magdalen's conduct, and to enumerate all her acts of repentant love. Nothing had escaped His notice. Each act was recapitulated and contrasted with the Pharisee's conduct. "*Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet ; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss ; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee : Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less.*" Truly, not an iota of all we try to do for God, passes unnoticed.

The Apostles were called by Christ to follow Him ; leaving all, they obeyed the Divine invitation. Some time after, Peter, with his usual straightforwardness and impetuosity, reminded our Lord of their sacrifice, and asked what should be the reward. Jesus had not forgotten their generosity. He enumerated all that they left—parents, home, and lands for His sake, and promised them in return a hundredfold here below, and in the world to come life everlasting.

What claim had the dying thief on our Lord's mercy, except his utter need and simple faith? "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*" Listen to the answer of Jesus, which is prefaced with the "*Amen*" our Lord uses only on specially solemn occasions : "*Amen ; I say to thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*" The

good thief did not appeal in vain to the Divine memory of Christ.

We are told in Holy Scripture that a cup of cold water given to a disciple for the Master's sake, shall in no wise lose its reward. Jesus identifies Himself so completely with His disciples, that the most trifling service rendered to the least of them is rewarded as a personal favour to Himself, and will be proclaimed to the world at the day of judgment. "*I was sick, and ye visited Me ; I was hungry, and ye fed Me.*" It seems as though St. Paul had these words before his mind when he tells us "*God is not unjust, that He should forget your work and the love which you have shown in His name, you who have ministered, and do minister to the saints.*" How many more examples might be cited to prove God's fidelity in rewarding us for our good works. Nor are our needs forgotten by Him. When the multitude had followed our Lord for three days into the desert, He **remembered** that they needed food, and worked a miracle to supply them with it. The Apostles were tossed on a stormy sea, and Jesus interrupted His prayer and walked on the waters to go to their assistance. He knew they longed for His presence, and could not leave them in distress. Zacheus was desirous to see our Lord, and, being of short stature, he climbed up a tree to attain his end. Jesus, knowing how earnestly the publican wished to see Him, not only granted this favour, but even called him down from the tree and expressed a desire to visit him.

If the Apostles were prevented by timidity from asking a question, their Master anticipated it, and

gave the reply. When Martha and Mary were in deep sorrow after the death of Lazarus, Jesus took a journey from beyond the Jordan that he might console them. Often He went to relieve those who were too ignorant or wretched to implore His aid, for the miseries of humanity ever attracted our loving Saviour, as the lodestone attracts steel. It was thus that He healed a blind man, the paralytic at Bethsaida, and the woman with a spirit of infirmity. He tells us : “ *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God.* ” How much more will He remember our necessities ?

The memory of Jesus for His own is the same in all ages. By Divine Providence our bodily needs are supplied ; by the Church, spiritual treasures are opened to us. What are the sacraments but our Lord’s provision for weak and sinful humanity ? What a motive for confidence is the thought that never for one instant is any creature of God forgotten by the Creator ! How often we have experienced this help in time of need. A crushing sorrow overwhelmed us, a bereavement had plunged our soul in the depth of anguish, anxieties and cares weighed us down. Yet there was a way of escape. God was faithful to His promises, we were comforted and strengthened.

How can a Christian distrust God when he reads the numerous promises with which Holy Scripture is studded ? Like the Incarnation, they are for “ *us men and for our salvation.* ” Throughout the ages, the voice of Jesus reaches us, “ *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will*

refresh you." "*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.*" "*I will come again and receive you to Myself.*" "*I will not leave you comfortless.*" How often, when receiving the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, have we realised the truth of these precious promises ! The thought of Jesus, present in the Holy Eucharist for all and for each individually, should strengthen our faith and increase our love. No, not even when clouds are darkest will we dishonour our Lord by distrusting His love and fidelity to His promises. A man treasures a jewel which has cost him a fortune ; shall He who gave His precious blood for our salvation be forgetful of us.

While we thank our loving Saviour for the good memory He has for each one of us, we may also be grateful that He has, strange though it may sound, a very bad memory for those things which we would wish Him to forget. Thank God, the memory of Jesus is very bad for our sins, negligences, and imperfections, for our coldness and ingratitude. How often, like the Apostles, have we deserted and "*followed Him afar off.*" When St. Peter denied Him, Jesus had no bitter reproaches for His Apostle. He turned and looked on him, and that Divine look went to the heart of Peter, causing a fountain of tears of repentance to spring forth, which, tradition tells us, flowed the whole of his life. On Easter Day, Jesus showed Himself to Peter alone, before appearing to all the Apostles in the upper room. What passed in that interview ? How we should like to know ! St. Peter will tell

us when we get to heaven ; then we may hope to learn some of those words and deeds of our Saviour, "*which, if they were written, every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.*" We may be sure that Jesus appeared to St. Peter alone, in order to pardon and console the penitent disciple. In a subsequent apparition, St. Peter was asked for a threefold act of love as a reparation for his threefold denial.

Both the thieves who were crucified with our Lord, had blasphemed against Him and mocked at His royalty ; one, touched by the grace of God, repented and asked pardon. It was freely granted, without a single reproach from our Saviour's lips. The very soldier who pierced the Sacred Heart is said to have been converted by the graces which flowed from it. The Divine promise is ever fulfilled, "*I will forgive their iniquity ; I will remember their sin no more.*" To all who seek reconciliation with God, there is the same loving reception. Truly, the memory of Jesus is bad for all we would have Him forget.

We are God's creatures, into whom our Heavenly Father breathed the breath of life. We, too, have a memory, the gift of God, to be used for Him. Alas ! how often we consign to oblivion the very things it is our duty to remember. We forget to thank God for His benefits, to render service to our neighbours, to fulfil our promises. We have prayed for help in some pressing need. Succour has been granted, and what proportion has our thanksgiving borne to the grace received ? At the

best, often our gratitude bears an inverse ratio to our petitions, and at other times it may be represented by a cypher.

We train our children to be polite. We expect them to say "Thank you" when we give them anything. Our Heavenly Father expects as much, yet how often are our thanks lacking. It is the old complaint, "*Where are the nine?*" Out of ten who were healed only one returned to give thanks. So now out of ten graces bestowed, rarely does God receive an acknowledgment for one. Gratitude is one of the rarest of virtues. Is not this because we have not "the memory of the heart" that we forget to give thanks, because our hearts are cold? Daily, hourly, God showers His gifts upon us ; thousands of possible evils are averted. Take two simple examples. How many temptations have you been spared, reader? You have condemned others for yielding to sins which have never tempted you. Again, God has given you the full use of your senses and faculties. You are neither deaf, dumb, nor blind. Have you ever *once* in your life thanked God for these intellectual and natural blessings? Yet if one of your senses was threatened how earnestly you would pray that it might be spared you. If only we had better memories we could easily pay our debts. In the Holy Mass Jesus offers Himself in thanksgiving for all the graces poured out on sinful humanity : by uniting our imperfect thanks to His Divine praises, our debt of gratitude would be solved.

But our neighbours, likewise, suffer from our

bad memory. We are members of the great human family, and all who are afflicted or who need help have a claim on our charity. The world is full of miseries ; now sickness, now bereavement afflicts our neighbour. Thus an invalid requires constant service at our hands ; he is impatient and exacting, but this does not dispense us from being charitable. After all, it is to our own advantage to help others, for may not the imperfections of our neighbour be utilised to provide us with the raw material of our virtue ? God can work good out of evil as refuse often realises a handsome profit. The essential is, that our services be rendered for God's sake.

Worldlings are wiser in their generation than the children of light. So it was of old, so it ever will be. A dependent will be patient with and humour an invalid, whose fortune he hopes to inherit. What he does for an uncertain earthly gain, cannot we do for God, and thus make our spiritual fortune ? Sometimes a poor relation has a claim on our purse. Many a man who will head a subscription list with one hundred guineas, will refuse a sovereign to a poor relation. Yet money is not given us to spend as we please, it is a talent for which we must give an account. Charity begins at home, but it does not end there : God's poor have a *right* to our alms. We are not to be satisfied, when we have given them what we do not need. They have also a right to our consideration : we should remember to spare their feelings, not to waste their time by keeping them waiting. So often, when a servant tells her mistress that a poor

person wishes to speak to her, the answer is, "She can wait." Would that lady have kept our Lord waiting? Then why needlessly detain His poor? Money is not the only alms we forget to bestow; a kind word goes far to relieve the afflicted. Let us ask our dear Lord, when we receive Him in Holy Communion, to sanctify our memory and make it mindful of all who need our help for His sake.

If we would meet our Judge with confidence at the hour of death, we must not be in debt with our neighbours as regards charity. Perhaps, like the Pharisee, you are willing to justify yourself, and therefore ask, "How far has my neighbour a claim on me?" Put yourself in his place, and give him what you would expect under the circumstances. Children often surprise us by their unselfishness. A little boy who attended a convent kindergarten was told by a sister that the Reverend Mother was very ill, and that he must pray for her. The next day the child put a small pill box into his mistress' hand, saying, "Please give that to Reverend Mother from me. It is my biggest marble, which I send her to play with." We "grown-ups," if we give up a marble at all, are wont to choose the smallest, forgetting that

Love delights to bring her best,
And where love is, that offering evermore is blest.

When the love of God increases, it will overflow on our neighbour and our memories will improve. Bad as our memory is for our neighbour's claims, it is often worse, as regards fulfilling our promises

to God. How often have we resolved to correct a fault, to avoid an occasion of sin, to forgive an injury? We made a good confession, and our purpose of amendment was sincere at the time, then fresh temptations came and our good resolutions were forgotten. Faith or fidelity is a fruit of the Holy Ghost ; we have a right to it, in virtue of our confirmation, and it is one of the best cures for a bad memory. On the other hand, our memory is only too good when we receive an affront, when our rights, real or imaginary, are infringed. If "wise memory" is ever to prevail, there is need of much "wise oblivion" first, and perhaps no act of virtue is more difficult than to forgive an injury. We know that we must forgive if we would be forgiven, still, the thought of the offence returns again and again with renewed bitterness. Others find it difficult to forget their good works, their pride feeds on them and thus destroys all their merit. Wiser are they who forget what is behind, in order to strive after what remains to be acquired. We are so far from the goal of holiness, and he who continually looks back, is apt to trip and certain to delay his course. Mary, our Mother, who kept God's loving messages and inspirations "*in her heart*" and pondered on them, is a model set before us. Above all, we will try to imitate the memory of Jesus ; from His Sacred Heart we can, by prayer, obtain something of that love which is stronger than death, "*many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it.*" With this love we shall, like St. Peter, be mindful of the word of the Lord, and glorify our Master by

using all the faculties of our soul for Him alone.
With St. Bernard we will pray :

May memory no thought supply
But shall to Thy pure glory tend.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent Jesus in the desert, surrounded by His Apostles and the multitude, when He multiplied the loaves and fishes.

2nd Prelude.—Ask our Lord to sanctify your memory that you may use it for Him.

1st Point.—Our Lord has a good memory for

(a) Our few and imperfect good deeds : examples, the parable of the two debtors, the dying thief.

(b) Our needs : example, He fed the multitude in the desert.

2nd Point.—Our Lord has a bad memory for our sins, negligences, and ingratitude : example, His treatment of St. Peter.

3rd Point.—We should have a good memory for

(a) Our obligations to God.

(b) Our duty towards our neighbour.

We ought to have a bad memory for

(a) Real or imaginary wrongs received.

(b) Our own good works and merits.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for remembering your feeble attempts to serve Him. Ask that you may have a good memory for what He would have you remember, viz., your obligations to Him and the claims of your neighbour. Make an act of contrition for sins committed by the misuse of your

memory, and promise to amend. Ask the intercession of our Blessed Lady, who pondered over in her heart what God revealed to her.

Resolution.—Banish from your memory to-day anything which might displease our Lord.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*”

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XX.

THE INVITATIONS OF JESUS.

GOD has endowed man with free will ; it is one of His noblest gifts to humanity. While creatures below, man cannot do otherwise than glorify God by fulfilling the laws He has laid down, we can render or refuse the service due to our Creator, for He wills to be served freely by those who enjoy the use of reason. Just as a soldier can use a deadly weapon against a foe, or injure himself with it, in the frenzy of madness, so our free will may be the means of procuring us eternal life or everlasting condemnation. In our Creator's design the will is to be the servant of reason, which in turn, is to be guided by faith.

Apart from the voice of conscience we can only know God's will by revelation ; reason, therefore, must submit to faith, since nothing is more reasonable than that man should submit to God, and the human will follow that course, which the judgment, supernaturally enlightened, deems best. How early in life we are conscious of our free will. A child's limited vocabulary always includes the words necessary to express assent and dissent. They were almost the first words we learnt, and many a time have we been punished for misusing them. A beggar's child can brave a crowned monarch, for that child can say, " I will not," and no earthly

power can make him yield. An interesting anecdote is related of the Prince of Wales' eldest son when he was about three years old. His mother or governess was teaching the child the court etiquette, how to kiss the late queen's hand and how to address her. The child learnt the lesson readily, but without realising to whom the homage was to be paid, for when he was in presence of the Queen he refused to go through the ceremony. On being urged to comply the little Prince replied, "No, I won't do it; she's not a majesty, she's my granny." A mere child refused the honour which all the loyal subjects of our beloved Queen prized so highly. Years, which will reveal to that child his error, will not always find God's creatures reasonable enough to render to their Creator the homage, which in their folly, they have so often refused. On this point, how many never attain the age of reason.

"Yes" and "No" are two simple words that are frequently on our lips, yet, it is no exaggeration to say that eternal salvation depends on using them aright. The man who can courageously say "No" to the temptation of the devil and his evil inclinations, will be ready to say "Yes" to the commands and invitations of Jesus Christ. We are already on the right road, when we have realised that salvation is a personal matter. Whoever wills seriously to save his soul attains his end, since a sincere desire ever leads to taking effectual means. On the other hand, the absence of a firm resolution to save our soul is as fatal as a determination to lose it. There is nothing negative about virtue; its very essence consists in

positive, definite actions, accomplished for God. "*Cease to do evil, learn to do well,*" is a precept of Holy Writ. There is no middle path, for who is not with Christ, is against Him; "*He who soweth not, scattereth.*" God treats His creatures with the greatest respect; He will never force their free will; though as Creator, He gives us precepts, yet constantly we find Him condescending to argue with His people.

Holy Scripture is full of God's invitations to them. The prophet Osee reveals to us how God dealt with the Jews of old: "*I was like a foster-father to Ephraim; I carried them in my arms, and they knew not that I healed them. I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love, and I will be to them as one that taketh off the yoke on their jaws; and I put his meat to him that he might eat.*" Under the new law our Saviour pursues the same loving course. His gentleness is typified by the title "Lamb of God." And Isaias prophesied of the Messias: "*The bruised reed He shall not break and smoking flax He shall not extinguish, till He send forth judgment into victory, and in His Name the Gentiles shall hope.*" As we read the Holy Scriptures, we find numerous invitations of our Lord. Let us meditate on a few that we may realise something of his infinite love and condescension. We will take the Gospel scenes in all their simplicity. Little children were presented to Him that He might lay His hands on them and pray. "*And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said to them: 'Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come*

to Me ; for the kingdom of heaven is for such." We can imagine the joy of the parents and the eager delight of these privileged little ones on whom our Saviour laid His Divine hands. Many of them probably became His disciples later on ; and when, in their old age, they never tired of relating how the Saviour had once blessed them, what regrets arose in the hearts of the listeners who had not been so privileged in their childhood.

A tradition tells us that St. Clement, the second Pope, had been thus blessed in infancy by the Saviour. We envy these children ; we would fain have been there : yet did not something similar happen to us when we were as yet unconscious of our own existence ? We were taken to God's house, the waters of Baptism flowed over us, and the Holy Ghost sanctified our soul and consecrated our body to be His temple. We were adopted as God's children. What was this but the blessing of Jesus ? To each child of Adam the invitation is repeated, "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me.*" Alas, like the Apostles of old, how often the disciples of Christ, instead of presenting their children at the font, keep them back ? Baptism is deferred, and, owing to their negligence, many children die without receiving this sacrament, and are thus deprived of the vision of God for all eternity. If our Saviour warns us, "*He that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea,*" what will He say to those who prevent the children from

coming to Him? We will strive, on the contrary, to bring them, that with them we may be blessed.

We were taken from the baptismal font ; seven or eight years passed over our heads ; gradually we acquired the use of reason, and, thanks to the teaching of a pious mother or nurse, we heard our Lord's invitation: "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*" We were taught to practise self-denial ; those who watched over us, helped us to conquer our childish faults ; good habits were acquired, and we were prepared for the battle of life when it should begin in earnest.

Alas ! for many this home training has been lacking. Many children are taught from their cradle to love the world, to esteem riches and pleasures. Their bodies are pampered while their souls are starved. Perhaps you know what it is to have been brought up thus, and when you attained to years of discretion, by a special grace you became serious and devout, and tried to save your soul in spite of your parents, and defective early training. You remember how hard it was to break through the chain of bad habits. Your experience will profit others if you strive to train differently those who depend on you. Parents who would shrink from cursing their children, do not hesitate to spoil them, to foster their evil passions, and to urge them on the road to eternal ruin. Whatever may have been our early surroundings, *now* we are old enough to hear the invitation of Jesus ; daily we will strive to take up

our cross, remembering that the royal way of the Cross is the only road to true happiness in this world, and in the next. "*Follow Me.*" Yes, we must not take up the cross and then stand still. Whither wilt Thou lead us, Master? From time to eternity, from earth to heaven. Bravely we will follow our Lord in the path of duty. Here we shall often find the road long and wearying. Obstacles lie in our path, difficulties appear insurmountable, the end seems so far off. The faithful accomplishment of duty always involves pain, and when we suffer, time drags heavily, and the daily routine engenders weariness, for suffering always seems to lengthen the road. One thought that may always encourage us is, that God never asks us to take more than one step at a time. Each day brings its grace ; this must suffice.

To some the invitation, "*Follow Me,*" may mean a call to a higher life, as it was to St. Peter and the other Apostles. Now, as then, Jesus calls to Him whom He will, and blessed are those who hear and obey the call. To all those who do follow our Lord seriously, whether His voice calls them to the path of the precepts or bids them follow the counsels, comes another invitation, "*Go and work in My vineyard.*" There is room for all ; time presses for each of us, since we know not how soon "*the night cometh, when no man can work.*" Every Christian must work in the vineyard of his own soul, and he finds there a wide field for labour : passions to train aright, evil habits to uproot, and virtues to cultivate. How often, in addition, does the fallow land of a conscience steeped in sin,

perhaps for many years, need breaking up by contrition and a good confession! Then there is the vineyard of our home circle, those who depend on us, or with whom we come in contact; and this is a field which widens as we increase in love. Beyond our family and friends, the view opens out on all sides, until it embraces Christ's Church on earth. Nothing that touches the Catholic Church should be without interest for us, who glory in the name of Catholic and profess a loving obedience to the Vicar of Christ. How comprehensive the horizon becomes — the line lengthens until it touches heaven on the one side and purgatory on the other, for both are parts of Christ's Church.

Truly, "*The harvest is great, but the labourers are few.*" We will do more than pray that God may send labourers into His vineyard; we will devote ourselves heart and soul, and whatever good work claims our co-operation we will gladly give it. It will not always be easy; whether we are struggling to sanctify ourselves or others, it is uphill work. Though sure of the ultimate victory in virtue of our Lord's promises to those who persevere, there may be partial defeats. We must suffer the reverses of war, which always has its seamy side; but when we are wearied with the conflict, comes the tender invitation of our loving Saviour, "*Come to Me all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*" He has prepared a resting-place by the way. As of old He invited His Apostles, after a night of toil, to "*come and dine,*" so He bids us feed and refresh our

weary souls with heavenly manna : “ *Take, eat, this is My body.* ” At the altar we find strength and grace to help us in all our necessities.

Prayer is another halting-place where the weary soul may seek and find courage. “ *Come ye into the desert and rest awhile.* ” We rest then at the Master’s feet, striving for a time to forget the things of earth, that we may be wholly occupied with our “ *Father’s business.* ” Prayer is a real rest for the soul ; “ *in silence, and in hope, shall your strength be.* ”

As we journey onward in the narrow way, often violent storms arise, heavy crosses weigh us down, our trials seem more than we can bear, but their violence will sooner or later calm down. As the Apostles, after the tempest on the lake, rested peacefully with our Lord, so after the storms of life, if our souls are pure, we shall hear the voice of the Master calling, and the last invitation of all will fall on our ears : “ *Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* ” Thus the invitations of Jesus gladden us from the cradle to the grave. They help us to realise His infinite love. He wills to have need of His creatures. If we all like to feel that we are “ *wanted,* ” that our presence rejoices and consoles others, what a joy to know that our Lord wants us, and ever presses us to come to Him. These few thoughts on the invitations of Jesus should teach us to have confidence in His Sacred Heart, both for ourselves and others.

What a welcome awaits those who arrive at

the portal of heaven, after a life devoted to the Master's service ! One word in conclusion. The voice of the Master is ever soft and low, and if we would hear His invitations we must be attentive to the inspirations of grace and the abiding disposition of our soul must be that of the child Samuel, "*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth,*" or "*Here am I, send me.*"

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent our Lord preaching to the multitude. Listen to His words : "*Come unto Me all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*"

2nd Prelude.—Ask for the grace not to turn a deaf ear to His loving invitations.

1st Point.—God has given man a free will ; hence salvation is a personal matter. Our Lord invites, He never forces.

2nd Point.—Invitations of Jesus :

- (a) He calls us in Baptism,
- (b) When we reach the use of reason.
- (c) When we are weary and laden.
- (d) To the Eucharistic table and to prayer.
- (e) In tribulation.
- (f) The last invitation : "*Come, ye blessed of My Father.*"

3rd Point.—Lessons we may learn from these invitations :

- (a) Something of His infinite love.
- (b) To have full confidence in the Sacred Heart for ourselves and others.

- (c) To correspond to His love by
1. Zeal for our sanctification.
 2. Zeal in God's vineyard.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for His loving invitations. Ask Him that you may be ever ready to accept them. Pray for those who turn a deaf ear to His loving voice. Ask for grace to remove the obstacles which might prevent your following Him.

Resolution.—Go to our Lord with confidence in all your difficulties. Trust to His love for yourself and others.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—"I come to do Thy will, O God."

Prayers.—Our Father, Suscipe.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TEARS OF JESUS.

THE tears of Jesus, of the Incarnate Word! What a contradiction it seems. Was it not enough that God the Son took a human nature without subjecting Himself to all the miseries of humanity? Yes, it would have been sufficient for our salvation, but He willed to give us an example, to be our Model in all things, so that we might be consoled in our sorrows by knowing that our Emmanuel has shared them with us. Not a pang traverses our soul that has not first passed through His Sacred Heart. Isaias had prophesied of the Messiah that He should be "*despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmities.*" How fully this prophecy was realised in our Lord's Passion. When Pilate, after the scourging, showed our Lord to the people, saying, "*Behold the Man,*" there was a depth of truth in those few words which that unjust judge did not fathom. Jesus is the "*Man of Sorrows,*" and sorrows express themselves by tears. Just because our Lord was so truly man, He shed tears. We are apt to pride ourselves on not giving way to them, to look upon them as a sign of weakness, and it is a sight that rends the heart to see a strong man shed tears. Yet our Lord condescended to stoop even to this act of humility. The Evange-

list mentions the tears of our Lord twice : over the grave of Lazarus "*Jesus wept,*" and on Palm Sunday, as He rode into Jerusalem, "*beholding the city, He wept over it.*" Nor were these the only times, we may devoutly believe, that our Lord shed tears. In the silence and solitude of night, on the mountains of Judea, the Son of Man retired to pray to His Heavenly Father and intercede for us. Throughout the long hours of night He wrestled with God for our salvation. It was the Son of God "*Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard for His reverence.*" What made those Divine tears flow ? There were three chief causes : the outrages offered to His Eternal Father, the sorrows of men, and the hardness of their hearts. How it would grieve a loving child to hear the best of fathers insulted and calumniated by his enemies ! But suppose the outrage was perpetrated by a son, how much more grievous the offence would be. What shall we say then when man dares to blaspheme God, and refuses to acknowledge His sovereign dominion ? How many times has this crime saddened the Heart of Jesus, and how often has He offered Himself, as He still offers Himself, in expiation for these outrages.

Our Saviour grieved also over the sorrows of men. St. Paul tells us to "*weep with them that weep.*" He had learnt the lesson from above. He had heard how Jesus arrived at Bethania and found Mary and Martha plunged in the deepest affliction at the death of Lazarus. Their tears

touched His Sacred Heart and He wept with them, though He knew that soon by His Divine power Lazarus would be restored to life. The multitude who saw our Lord weeping, said. “*Behold how He loved him.*”

They knew the source from which those Divine tears sprang. So it must ever be ; compassion for the sorrows of others can only spring from love, and the stronger our love, the more intense will be our compassion. Jesus has given an example, and He wills that we should imitate it. “*Bear ye one another’s burdens*” is an apostolic precept which binds all the followers of Christ. We are members of the great human family, and all have a claim on our love and sympathy. Their fate cannot be a matter of indifference to us, since Jesus came on earth to seek and save that which was lost ; and how it pierced His soul when men refused the graces which He shed His Precious Blood to purchase ! “*Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life,*” was His tender reproach to the stubborn Jews. He wept over Jerusalem, because it had not known the time of its visitation. None ever knew the value of a soul as Jesus did, hence none ever sorrowed over their loss as He sorrowed. The fire of zeal burned brightly in the souls of the Apostles, and St. Paul tells us he was willing to suffer “*anathema*” or curse for their sake ; yet his love for the Jews was but a faint reflection of the infinite love of our Saviour.

If the spiritual welfare of others does not concern us ; if, with Cain, we ask, “*Am I my brother’s keeper ?*” how can the love of God dwell in us ?

For the salvation of a soul, all, even life itself, must be sacrificed, and the martyrs of charity rank with martyrs of truth. Often we are harassed by doubts and fears as to our own salvation; the thought comes "Shall I persevere?" What better means to allay these apprehensions than to work for the salvation of others, since the promise is formal: "*They that turn many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity?*"

Tears have a mighty influence over the hearts of men. A criminal was condemned to be executed for a grievous crime. The priest visited him, and tried his best to prepare him for death, but the poor man was obdurate; he would neither listen to the priest's exhortations nor consent to utter a prayer. The only words that passed his lips were blasphemies and oaths. The fatal day approached when the law was to exact the penalty of the murder, still the prisoner hardened his heart and refused to be reconciled to God. But one brief hour remained, and the zealous priest, who had striven so earnestly with God for the salvation of that soul, was almost in despair. At last he threw himself on his knees before the murderer, and implored him once more to make his peace with God. As the good priest pleaded, his tears fell on the man's hand. The murderer started up, exclaiming, "What, Father, you cry over a wretch like me!" The victory was gained, and the man made a good confession, won by the tears of true love. If a soul steeped in sin can be thus softened by the tears of pity, how much more is a good-hearted man sensible to the miseries of others?

How our Lord was touched by tears. They moved Him to compassion, and often the words "*Weep not*" were prefatory to working a miracle to alleviate the sufferer. So it was with the widow of Naim; and when St. Mary Magdalen "*washed His feet with her tears,*" He accepted this token of her repentance, and absolved her from the stains of sin. On Easter morn, when she found the sepulchre empty, and stood there weeping, Jesus appeared to her, but she did not recognise Him. Moved by her grief, He said, "*Woman, why weepest thou?*" Thinking it was the gardener, she told Him the cause of her grief. "*They have taken away my Lord.*" Then Jesus revealed Himself to her by one word, "*Mary,*" and instantly she recognised her Divine Master.

In her, the beatitude was fulfilled, "*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" Holy Scripture abounds with such promises: "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joys.*" "*Blessed are ye that weep now.*" How utterly opposed such teaching is to our poor human conception. If this doctrine had not been given us by the Eternal Truth, who could have believed it? Even now, though we know our Master has beatified tribulation, how hard it is to bear. The saints penetrated the secret mysteries of sorrow, they found the hidden joy of bearing their cross for the love of Jesus. They loved suffering as a means for man to pass from darkness to light, and to sanctify his soul. To imitate our Saviour by walking in His footsteps was their great ambition; and so far did they carry this "*folly of the Cross,*" that we find

them taking for their motto words like St. Teresa's, "Either suffer or die," while St. John of the Cross uttered those burning words of love, "Not die, but rather suffer." They were impelled to heroism by love, knowing that though "*weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.*" That morn of eternal beatitude is well worth striving for; the night of sorrow compared to the morning of joy, is like a second in comparison with eternity. What we have suffered is over, but the merit remains; and of all our acts done for God, suffering is, perhaps, the one which is done with the greatest purity of intention, for there is less risk of its being marred by self.

What lessons can we learn from the tears of Jesus? There are many; foremost comes the thought that our Saviour, by deigning to shed tears, has sanctified ours. Those who follow our Lord in the narrow path that leads heavenward, must have trials. It cannot be otherwise, since Christ suffered "*leaving an example that we should walk in His footsteps,*" as St. Peter tells us. Those sacred footsteps are marked in blood, and often the toils of the way, and the sorrows of life, will bring tears to our eyes. Tears are precious in the sight of God, for they remind Him that Jesus has wept. The thought comforts us, and with a resolute will

We toil on,
And soothe ourselves with weeping,
Till life's long night shall break in endless love.

Another thought that consoles us, is the transitory nature of our tears. For in heaven, "*The Lord God shall wipe away tears from every face.*" How

many who have long since entered into their rest and the joy of their Lord, had a thorny path to tread when on earth. All is now over; as they shared the Master's Cross, so now they share His joy—and that joy is eternal. Do they remember their brief affliction now? Yes, but only as a cause of thanksgiving. If the saints in heaven could have a regret, would it not be that they did not suffer more generously during their brief pilgrimage on earth? Grief is transient, heaven is eternal. The first, rightly borne, merits the second. Since our sufferings united to those of Christ, purchase heaven, may we not call them the passports to our eternal home, for none are admitted there who are not conformed to the image of Him who when on earth was "*the man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmities*?" It was this thought that encouraged St. Paul "to glory in his infirmities," since by them, he was crucified to the world and rendered conformable to his Divine Master. Jesus on Mount Calvary, is the pattern given us "*on the mountain*," that we may strive to imitate Him.

Often our tears flow for those who are far from God: thus a mother sorrows for her child who, seduced by the world's pleasures, is erring on the broad road. Who knows how many tears are needed to purchase from our merciful Saviour the long-desired grace? The measure has not been revealed, but each tear, each prayer counts. Years may pass, but though we see no fruit of our suffering, yet it is impossible that the object of so many prayers and sufferings should perish.

The example of St. Augustine is a touching proof of this. Only when he was thirty-three years of age were his mother's prayers heard. God waited that He might answer her petition more fully than she had ever anticipated, for the mother's prayers won a saint and a doctor for the Church.

We are all called to do good in the world, but for some it is their special vocation to be apostles, to sow the good seed. Their mission is often arduous, and the one who sows, is often called hence before the harvest time. Another reaps the fruit of his labours ; yet for both, the promise holds good that those who go forth weeping and bearing the good seed, shall return joyfully laden with their sheaves. Constantly the Apostles speak of their cares and anxieties, as they laboured in the Master's fields. "*I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you*"; and again, "*I wrote to you with many tears.*"

What a consolation to unite those sorrows of the apostolic life with the tears of Jesus over Jerusalem, to remember that our Lord also offered His supplications with tears "*to Him that was able to save.*" This thought will check discouragement and enable us to overcome all obstacles : rough though the way may be, our Captain goes before us. Can we do less than follow? Whither does He lead us? Home, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things have passed away."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent our Lord shedding tears at the grave of Lazarus.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to sympathise with others in their sorrows.

1st Point.—The Man of Sorrows deigned to shed tears. They were caused by:—

- (a) The outrages offered to His Eternal Father.
- (b) The hardness of men's hearts.
- (c) The sorrows of mankind.
- (d) The loss of souls.

2nd Point.—Lessons to be learnt :

- (a) By His tears, Jesus sanctified ours.
- (b) Heaven is the reward, for those who share the Master's Cross.
- (c) Suffering passes ; having suffered never passes.

Colloquy.—Thank Jesus for having deigned to shed tears. Ask that your tears may be shed for the same motives as His. Pray for those dear to you, who are far from God.

Resolution.—Render service to all who need your help ; or, bear your cross bravely for the love of God.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—"Jesus wept."

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Hail Mary.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VISITS OF JESUS.

A FEARFUL crime has been committed ; the particulars have kept the public interested and excited for some weeks. Some think hanging too merciful for the accused, others see only the extenuating circumstances. At last the verdict is given, and the latter breathe more freely when they hear that the sentence is imprisonment for life. The decision is discussed for a few days, then something fresh interests the public, and the convict passes from the memory of the living. What an awful thing to be imprisoned for *life* ! Dear as life is, many would sacrifice it rather than endure the life-long penalty of imprisonment. Cut off from all he loves, condemned to perpetual labour, the convict's life passes slowly away. Hard work and prison fare are but a small part of the punishment, for many a free man toils incessantly, and has meagre fare ; but the deprivation of a friend, the absence of all marks of affection, what a fast for the human soul !

How in the solitary cell, the heart hungers for the annual letter, the yearly visit of a relation. Man cannot live alone ; but if it be true that "Solitude is the home of the strong, silence their prayer," it is equally true that few are strong

enough to dwell in solitude. As we pass a gaol we pity intensely the captives who are there deprived of friendship, one of the greatest boons Heaven bestows on man. "To visit the imprisoned" is a corporal work of mercy, to which the Church, in her tender sympathy for the captive, grants an indulgence: she knows that man has need of the society of his fellows, for God has created us to live together. Just as truly as we are necessary to each other's happiness, so can the soul only be happy when in communication with God. We came from Him, He breathed into us the breath of life, and His presence is the life of our soul as He is our origin and end.

The Creator knows that sinful humanity has need of His friendship; and He, who scans the inmost recesses of our nature, deigns to visit us in this world of toil and sorrow. Jesus deigns to visit the soul; and as we think of His wondrous condescension, ever anticipating and supplying our needs, the heart must indeed be cold that does not realize more deeply the love of Him, "*Who is more friendly than a brother.*"

When did Jesus come to our soul for the first time? For most of us, before we could either desire Him or render thanks for His visit. As infants, we were taken to the baptismal font, our soul disfigured by original sin; God could not gaze on it with pleasure, still less unite Himself to us. Long before we were able to realise our misfortune or implore His pity, He visited us, and as the waters of Baptism were poured on our heads, God took possession of our souls and consecrated them

as His dwelling-place. It was the first link of a long chain of graces. To our baptism we owe the innumerable spiritual gifts of God which we have received since. On that day, faith, hope, and charity were implanted in the soul ; an indelible spiritual character was likewise imprinted. From that moment, we were reckoned among the children of God, and members of the Church. Truly Jesus was munificent in His gifts at His first visit. We became the owners of a spiritual fortune ; and looking back on the years of our baptismal innocence, we can thank God that, at least for a time, He could dwell in our soul with joy, for we were pure in His sight.

How much we owe to our baptism, yet how few people ever think of this, and still less thank God for having been adopted in infancy as His children. Have you ever given thanks for this unspeakable gift ? Do you know the date of your baptism, and keep up the anniversary by a special Communion of thanksgiving ? This is a Christian practice which should not be forgotten. In earthly matters we keep up the remembrance of special days. Every soldier who has fought in a famous battle remembers the year and the date. A country rids itself of a foreign yoke, and ever after, the anniversary is kept as a day of rejoicing. Shall we do less to keep up a souvenir of our baptism, when we were delivered from the tyranny of Satan, and when Jesus Christ, as a conqueror, took possession of our souls ? Has God given you children, reader ? If so, respect the purity of their souls, instruct them concerning the Sacrament of Baptism, and

keep up the anniversary as a festival day. In Catholic countries it is customary to celebrate the feast of the patron saint, rather than the birthday. This is a more Christian practice, for surely we have reason to celebrate our being made a child of God, rather than our coming into this world as sinful children of Adam.

Time passed on, and we came to the use of reason, and happy are we, if by the grace of God we have always avoided mortal sin. In any case, we have all committed venial sins more or less deliberately, since it is impossible for fallen humanity to live without ever offending God. So for each came the moment, when, for the first time, the temple of the soul, God's dwelling-place of predilection, was stained by an actual sin. Do you remember your first deliberate sin? Probably it was a childish theft, a lie, or an act of disobedience, but you knew it was wrong. Most thoughtful children can remember when the existence of God seemed to dawn upon them for the first time. Perhaps it was in a moment of peril, or after a fault, or during some religious instruction, or as the child gazed on a loved parent in the long, narrow coffin. Often this consciousness comes after a fault; then it is God's grace touching the soul and leading it to repentance.

By the grace of contrition and the Sacrament of Penance, Jesus visits the soul. He comes to repair the ruin sin has wrought. He comes to heal the wounds which man has, in suicidal madness, inflicted on himself. How often we have received His visit in this sacrament of reconciliation. We have

approached the confessional weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, and have tried to make our confession truthfully and humbly ; and, as the words of absolution were pronounced by the priest, the Divine Physician touched and healed the wounds of sin, and we went forth comforted and strengthened, firmly resolving to do better for the time to come. Such are the graces which Jesus ever communicates to the guilty soul when He visits it in the Sacrament of Penance. Do we realise this after a fault? If so, our confessions will not be made by routine, for sincere contrition and a firm resolution to amend are required by our Lord as the condition of His visit. In this sacrament, sanctifying grace is either given or augmented ; and what is grace but a closer union with God, a participation in His Divine nature? The mere thought of going to the Sacrament of Penance *to meet God*, should stimulate us to greater fervour and devotion in our confessions. But this union depends on the purity of the soul, which in its turn depends on contrition ; hence, what an incentive to pray earnestly for perfect contrition, since our closer union with our Divine Lord, is in direct proportion to our purity.

But our confession is generally, though not of necessity, part of our preparation for Communion. In the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Jesus visits the soul of man. It is the sacrament of union, instituted by our Saviour that He might abide with us even to the end of time. He is hidden under the sacramental veils which, while they conceal Him, reveal to us His presence. Holy Com-

munion is a foretaste of heaven ; for what is heaven but the eternal union of the soul with God ? On earth, our souls are nourished by God's grace and the sacraments. In heaven, He will communicate Himself to us without the sacramental veils. Then "*We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*" The visit of Jesus in Holy Communion, has for its primary object to strengthen the soul by union with Himself. Other graces, such as spiritual consolation, tender devotion to the Passion, realisation of the Divine Presence, may be granted ; but *they are accessory*, and the fruit of our devotion does not depend on the sensible fervour which, at times, animates the soul. True devotion consists in a firm resolution to do God's will, which is perfectly compatible with spiritual dryness. Of old, God sustained Moses and Elias without food for forty days, and the miracle was repeated for His Divine Son. St. Luke tells us, speaking of those days of fasting : "*When they were ended, He was hungry.*" Although He was miraculously sustained, yet the feeling of hunger was allowed to torment Him. So in Communion, though Jesus sustains us by His precious Body and Blood, He may allow us to feel a kind of famine in the soul, or a hunger for His sensible presence. The two are not incompatible : God allows it that our merit may be increased.

Is not this also foreshadowed by the manna which nourished the Israelities in the desert ? In appearance it remained unchanged, while the savour differed. "*He that seeketh findeth.*" Let us there-

fore seek in Holy Communion, union with Jesus, and renewed strength in consequence, and our loving Saviour will visit the soul. If He wills, sensible consolation may be added, but in the pilgrimage of life, Jesus oftener comes as our "*hidden God.*" In heaven we shall be amply compensated for our faith, when the sacramental veils shall disappear and He will reveal Himself to us in all His beauty. Meanwhile, when spiritual consolations are denied, let us cling all the more firmly to the promises of our Emmanuel. "*If any man will hear My voice and open to Me the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me.*"

In Communion, Jesus strengthens the souls for the pilgrimage of life. As we kneel at the altar of God, may we not hear the whisper of the angel as Elias heard it of old, "*Arise and eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go*"? It is no less than the journey from earth to heaven. On that narrow road trials await us, enemies lurk unseen, temptations beset us. Does the Master leave His disciples to struggle on alone? No, He visits them; He is never nearer, than when we are in tribulation or struggling with the tempter. The three children were thrown into the fiery furnace for resisting the tyrants order. True to their God, they preferred death to disobedience. The furnace was heated "*seven times more than it had been accustomed to be heated.*" So great was the heat that the "*flame of the fire slew those men that had cast in Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago.*" What happened to the heroes themselves? "*They walked in the midst of the flame praising God. The angel of the Lord*

drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace, and made the midst of the furnace like a wind bringing dew, and the fire touched them not at all." Nabuchodonosor, hearing of this miracle, sent his servant to see if it were true. The messenger returned, saying : "*Behold I see four men loose and walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*" As God visited His saints of old by angels, so in the New Testament we read of Jesus visiting His own.

Lazarus was dead, and his two sisters were plunged in the deepest grief. Presently a rumour that the Master was approaching reached Bethania. Martha hurried to assure herself that it was true, and then sought her sister, to whom she gave the welcome news that Jesus was at hand to console and strengthen them. The disciples were once tossed on a strong sea while Jesus prayed on the mountain. When the peril was extreme, then their Master rose, and walking on the waves went to help his distressed Apostles. Can a mother refuse to go when she hears the voice of her child imploring help and protection? How, then, can our loving Saviour ever desert His disciples in sorrow, temptation, or tribulation? After all, rightly looked at, what are our crosses, but visits from Jesus in disguise?

When the cross presses heavily on our bruised shoulders, when the way seems interminable, when all human hope fails, then look up; *the darkest hours are God's chosen ones for helping.* Oftentimes in sorrow we hear a Christian exclaim, as the reed of human succour fails, "I have no hope but

in God!" The *least* has failed us, the *greatest* remains. What would all the rest be without God? "*It is better to fall into the hands of God than of man.*" Cling to his promises and all will be well. Meditate on these divinely inspired words, and they will strengthen and encourage you in the time of trial. "*The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him.*" "*The Lord is become a refuge for the poor, a helper in due time in tribulation. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart.*" "*The salvation of the just is from the Lord, and He is their protector in the time of trouble, and the Lord will help them and deliver them.*" "*He is a protector to all that seek Him in truth.*" "*Lo, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world.*" Clearly in our tribulations, we are not alone; with our Lord we can brave the danger and struggle on, falling now and again owing to the weakness inherent to humanity, but rising and pursuing our way confident of the issue, if only we cling to God.

As day follows night, so joys and sorrows alternate in this world. The life of a Christian is chequered, and God allows it for our sanctification. After a victory gained, a sorrow accepted, comes the hour of consolation. The Apostles were struggling on in their frail bark against winds and billows. The Master arose. He spoke one word of command, "*Peace, be still,*" and there was a great calm, and they "*found themselves in the haven where they would be.*" God can do more in a second, than we can accomplish in a life of toil. Two disciples were journeying sadly to

Emmaus, but when Jesus joined Himself to them their hearts burned within them. Whence this change? It was due to the visit of the Divine Master; peace was the legacy He bequeathed to His disciples, and for those who love and serve Him, it was the sure mark of the visit of Jesus. Have you never experienced a joy and consolation in prayer after a fervent Communion, or during a visit to the Blessed Sacrament? Have you never felt yourself animated during a mission or retreat, to serve God with greater fervour? These fruits were the effects of the visit of Jesus, and when He came, your heart burned within you. Consolation in prayer is not essential, but it is a help along the narrow way. Often it is a warning that trials await us, just as the vision of Thabor was given to prepare the Apostles to witness Christ's agony in Gethsemani.

What should be our conduct as regards consolation in prayer? Neither to desire it inordinately nor to despise it. When God sends spiritual sweetness, we must profit by it to lay up provisions for the time of dearth, which generally follows. When He withholds it, we calmly submit, knowing that our Lord has two ways of visiting the soul, openly or in some disguise. In our spiritual life, we must try to be disinterested, *to serve God for Himself and not for His gifts*. Let us never doubt the love of Jesus; if the Master was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, how much more must the disciples be conducted thither? But notice the words, "*led by the Spirit*," hence the Christian is not alone in the combat.

To-day our Lord visits us by desolation in prayer, or temptation; to-morrow perchance He will take another form, and it is by the voice of conscience or the inspiration of some good thought that the Master makes His presence felt. How many good thoughts and intentions we have had in our life. Each one came from God, each was the result of a divine inspiration. Are you faithful to the inspiration of God's grace, to the still voice of conscience? Take care never to despise either, as you would fear to close the door, in the face of our Saviour. Who knows how much may depend on our generosity in following an inspiration of God's grace? For many it has been the beginning of a life of heroism and holiness, a call to the perfect life. True, every seemingly good inspiration does not come from God, for the devil can transform himself into an angel of light; but if we doubt, we have an earthly guide, our confessor, who is charged to interpret the will of God for us.

When we read the account of the last judgment in the Holy Gospel, we are struck by the vivid word-picture, and we seem to hear our Lord saying: "*I was sick and in prison, and ye visited Me.*" Then they also shall answer Him, saying: "*Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?*" Then He shall answer them, saying: "*Amen! I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me.*" How clearly we see here that Jesus claims our loving care in His

poor. There are so many demands on our time, our care, our purse, but it is for the Master. Let us beware how we refuse a service to our neighbour, for by so doing we refuse it to our Lord.

But, it is objected, people are so ungrateful. Yes, this is true ; none exemplify it perhaps, more than we ourselves : still, however little thanks we receive from our neighbour, God is always grateful, and He rewards each service as rendered to Himself. It is not only the poor who claim our love ; often a mother needs some thoughtful attention ; a sick person must be tended ; a mourner seeks our sympathy ; and in each case, if the act of charity be performed with purity of intention, if we can look through the creature and see God in our neighbour, it will be easier to sacrifice our rest, ease, and comfort for Him to whom we owe all. He "*whose we are and whom we serve*" will not suffer us to go unrewarded. But those who implore our charity are often hypocrites, men steeped in sin, scoffers and unbelievers. How can they represent Jesus Christ to us ? Can we minister to such "*as unto Him*" ? Why not ? All men are created to God's image. Would you profane a crucifix because it was covered with mud and filth ? No matter how degraded a human being may be, there is something left of God's image. Sin has not quite stamped it out, and who knows but that the sinner may one day become a great saint ? Always we shall have the poor with us, that through them, we may endeavour to discharge our debt of love and gratitude to God. What have we

done for Christ in His poor, what are we doing, and what *more* can we do?

“*Angels ministered unto Him.*” We need not envy them ; we, too, can minister unto Him, and in future we will strive to be more faithful to our obligations. After all it is our own interest, for none is better prepared for the last visit of Jesus, than the Christian who strives to practise charity. For each faithful soul the hour must come when the promise shall be fulfilled : “*I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am there also you may be.*”

Some earnest souls are tormented throughout their whole lives by the fear of death. The thought of God’s judgments terrifies them ; they can only see this one aspect of death, yet why not also think of the joy of never sinning, of the happiness of meeting those whom we have mourned, of entering into our eternal rest ; then we shall see God’s saints and angels and pass our eternity with them. Above all, we shall satisfy our life-long hunger and thirst for God. How often, during our earthly pilgrimage, we have longed to see our Lord, to gaze on His human features, and to worship at His feet. In heaven all our desires will be fully satisfied, and death is but the ford which, with Jesus as guide, we must cross, in order to “*see Him as He is.*”

Death’s but a path that must be trod,
If man would ever pass to God.

For us, as for the Apostles, when the morn of eternity dawns after the stormy voyage of life, we shall see “*Jesus standing on the shore.*” Then He,

whom throughout our human life a cloud has received out of our sight, will manifest Himself to us. We shall be like Him, for "*We shall see Him as He is.*" These thoughts rob death of its terrors. Why should we fear to meet our Lord? Is it the thought of our sins and negligence? We have the assurance of His pardon, and a glance at the five wounds will suffice to calm our uneasiness. Truly, death is but the visit of Jesus when He comes to take us to our long home. When will the meeting take place? We know not; for some it may be very near, others are farther from the goal. Each Christian will one day hear the Saviour's gentle voice: "*Behold I come quickly.*" Happy are they who, in the assurance of humble, loving faith, can welcome the Master's visit and reply, "*Come, Lord Jesus.*" But some timid soul replies, "I am not ready; I dare not welcome Him." Tell our Lord this, and ask Him to prepare you. *It is His work far more than yours.* What can man do without God's help? Do your best, little and imperfect though it may be. Leave the rest to the Master. We shall have our Heavenly Mother's prayers to help us in the last struggle; for how can she refuse her aid when we have prayed daily, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the *hour of our death.* Amen"?

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent our Lord in the dead of night, walking on the water towards the ship in which the Apostles were.

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to profit fully by the visits of Jesus.

1st Point.—Jesus visited our souls in Baptism ; He comes in the Sacrament of Penance to heal our souls, in Holy Communion to nourish and strengthen us.

2nd Point.—Our Master visits us also by tribulations, in temptation, by His inspirations.

3rd Point.—He visits us in His poor, to whom we can minister for His sake. Death is His final visit.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for all His visits. Ask that you may recognise Him, even when He comes in disguise. Pray for grace to profit by His visits. Ask pardon for having kept Him waiting at the door of your heart, and promise amendment.

Resolution.—To visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and in His poor. How can you do this to-day ?

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“ Behold I stand at the door and knock.”

Prayers.—Soul of Christ, Memorare.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND.”

OF all the sorrows that the human heart is called to bear, those which come from the hands of friends are undoubtedly those we feel most keenly. An injury, an insult from a foe does not surprise us ; we expect nothing better, and are therefore prepared to meet it, but when the blow comes from those we trusted and to whom we have so often rendered service, then the trial is indeed hard. Not only does it fall on us unexpectedly, but we feel that it is so unmerited, that we had not deserved such different treatment from them. Our dear Lord, who willed to give us an example of all virtues, was not exempted from this trial ; the prophet Zacharias, speaking in the name of the Messias, says, “ *With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me.*” It is true that these words have been more usually applied to the wounds in our Lord’s hands and feet at the time of His Passion, but there are other wounds also which Christ received from His friends and which formed part of His interior sufferings.

Throughout the whole of his life on earth, Jesus ever did good to all who approached Him. When He traversed Palestine during His public life, He passed as the good physician and the teacher ; He

healed all who were brought to Him. He taught the ignorant, and none applied for aid and were refused. Our Saviour was well known in Judæa, for He was constantly travelling about the land, and wherever He went, crowds thronged and hung on His Divine words. He fed the multitude in the desert : on one occasion there were as many as four thousand, on another five thousand. St. Matthew tells us that after our Saviour had healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, "*When evening was come they brought to Him many that were possessed with devils : and He cast out the spirits with His word : and all that were sick He healed.*" This is not a solitary instance ; many other examples could be cited. If we knew all the miracles which Jesus worked to relieve the bodily ailments or necessities of man, what an immense multitude we should find, had profited by our Saviour's loving kindness. The ignorant were taught, the poor fed, the blind saw, the deaf heard, devils were cast out, and even the dead were restored to life. So great was our Saviour's fame that even His enemies were forced to confess, "*Behold, the whole world is gone after Him.*" Often He had to depart secretly from the crowds that followed Him ; once the people even wished to make Him their King, and on Palm Sunday, multitudes went forth to meet and conduct Him in triumph into Jerusalem.

All these men had received innumerable benefits from Jesus and consequently owed Him a debt of love and gratitude. Good Friday came, and how did the people act ? They crowded into Jerusalem. Was it to defend Christ from His persecutors, as

we might reasonably have expected, and as the Scribes and Pharisees themselves feared? No, they came to clamour for His condemnation and to rejoice over His sufferings, to change the hymn of triumph for the cry of rage. The very lips that had cried "*Hosanna*" now shouted "*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*" How quickly they had forgotten all they owed our Lord. Perhaps even those who had been cured began to doubt if their restoration to health had not been effected by the power of the devil. It is true that the people were ignorant, and urged on by their leaders; but it is equally true that they had all received benefits from Jesus, and that out of the vast multitudes He had succoured, not one came forward to speak in his favour.† It was indeed the hour of the powers of darkness. How Jesus must have suffered for their ingratitude! Doubtless he recognised many of those who scoffed at Him, who demanded His death. Perhaps the very voice they used, had been restored to them by a miracle. Ingratitude is a bitter chalice, but our Saviour drank it to the dregs. He was not astonished at their conduct. He knew the fickleness of the people, and even when He healed, blessed, and taught them, had foreseen how they would turn against Him and intensify His sufferings.

But, after all, these were not His fervent disciples, they were only the multitude, who but saw our Saviour occasionally. From His own, something better might be expected. Was the expectation realised? Holy Scripture will supply us with the

answer if we turn over its pages. We read that during the whole of our Lord's public life He gradually gathered disciples around Him, and of these He called some to work in the vineyard of the Church. St. Luke tells us: "*The Lord appointed also other seventy-two, and He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself was to come.*" To each, power was given to heal the sick and to cast out devils. They went forth in Christ's name as His ambassadors, for our Lord concluded His instruction to them with these solemn words: "*He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.*" They accomplished their mission faithfully, and returned rejoicing, that the devils even had been subject to them in their Master's name.

There was a chosen band of holy women who ministered to Christ and His little band of followers. They gave up their wealth and time to the service of the Master and His Apostles. We also know that when Christ ascended into heaven there were disciples present. Where were they during the Passion? Of the disciples none came forward. Only when Christ had expired, did Joseph of Arimathea beg to be allowed to bury the body of Jesus in his own sepulchre, in which work of love Nicodemus helped. Mary, our Immaculate Mother, of whose presence we do not read when the multitude acclaimed our Lord, now stood by the Cross, together with "*His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.*" No other holy women are men-

tioned as being present. These disciples could not plead ignorance, which might have been a partial excuse for the multitude. They knew our Lord better ; constantly they had heard His Divine instructions, yet, in spite of their knowledge, fear paralysed their good will, and Christ was left to tread the wine-press alone. So He had willed it ; nevertheless their cowardice must have grieved the Sacred Heart : these were wounds received in the house of those who loved Him.

Now we come to the inner circle, the beloved Apostles, who had been chosen to form the apostolic college. For three years they had not left our Lord, except when sent on their different missions. They had seen more miracles than the disciples had been privileged to witness. Often Christ explained things privately to them, which were only revealed to others in parables. After three years' training with Christ as their Master, what might we not expect of such men? Did they rejoice our Lord by their proficiency in the divine science of the Cross? Yes, later, after the Holy Ghost had descended on them ; but during our Lord's earthly life, how often they failed to profit by their advantages. Constant companionship with Jesus had not taught them to love poverty, to face danger and suffering for Christ's sake. These lessons were too difficult for them to master. As the moment of the Passion drew near, Judas conceived the horrible design of betraying his Master ; and with this base project in view, he dared to remain in the presence of Christ, to assist at the Last Supper, and to keep up the mask of

hypocrisy. To effrontery, he added the crimes of sacrilege and despair, and then the traitor "*went to his own place.*" What a grief for the loving Heart of our Saviour to see an Apostle thus fall, one whom He had loved and instructed, and to whom He had given miraculous gifts. Judas once *an Apostle*, now *a lost soul* in hell! What an awful thought, and how it teaches us to distrust self.

Did the other Apostles console our Lord? We know the sad story, how Peter presumptuously declared his willingness to follow Jesus to prison and to death, and how afterwards, when the time came to accomplish these promises, he slept in the garden during His Master's agony. The soldiers arrived to take our Lord, then Peter made one effort to defend Him, after which he fled from the garden. It would have been well for him, if he had remained away, but he followed afar off, and finally denied Christ thrice, the last time confirming his assertion "*with an oath,*" and "*immediately the cock crew.*" Then Jesus turned and looked on Peter, and that look penetrated his inmost soul, and a fountain of tears of contrition welled forth, which only ceased to flow when St. Peter gave his life for God. There was no anger in our Lord's look, for He knew that it was weakness, and not malice which caused St. Peter to fall; nevertheless, since Christ was so truly man, how could He fail to be deeply grieved at such conduct from one who had made so many protestations of fidelity? St. John, the beloved disciple, and St. James, alike slept in Gethsemani. All the Apostles abandoned Christ during His Passion; only St.

John had the courage to stand at the foot of the Cross with our Blessed Lady and St. Mary Magdalen, the penitent, and Mary of Cleophas.

When we contemplate our Master weeping over Jerusalem, when we see how much He suffered when rejected by the Jews, His own people, we can feel certain that the infidelity and cowardice of the disciples and Apostles, was one of His deepest sorrows. To have done so much for His own, and to receive so little in return when the hour of trial came, could not fail to grieve our loving Master. He had every claim on their gratitude in return for all the benefits He had bestowed on them. He had given His Precious Blood for their salvation, and thus they were doubly His by creation and redemption; and in spite of these claims on their love and gratitude, He only received coldness, neglect, denial, and treachery. Such were the wounds which Christ received from those whom He deigned to call “friends.”

As we think of this part of the interior Passion of Jesus, the thought comes, Do I *console* or *sadden* the Heart of our loving Saviour when I am called to bear witness for God? Do I conceal or apologise for my faith? Have I the courage of my convictions? Do I allow the Catholic faith to be attacked with impunity in my presence? Do I excuse myself from fighting on the side of Catholicity, under the pretext that it is not my business, or that others can do it better? The laity can do so much good in the world by standing up for their faith, and can often penetrate where a priest

would not be received. It must rejoice our Saviour to see His disciples bravely fighting in the front and fearlessly displaying their colours. All are not called into the arena of controversy, many cannot take up active work for God in the world, but the home circle affords many occasions of being true to our colours. The frequentation of the sacraments, and fidelity in attending to our religious duties, is a profession of faith ; whereas the nominal Catholic, who rarely or never attends Mass, and neglects the laws of the Church, denies his faith in deed as often as he infringes these precepts. Our Lord has a right to expect something better from those whom He has admitted into the Church by Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, and nourished in Holy Communion. At least we can resolve never to swell the ranks of the deserters, and to pray for those who are erring far from God, grieving the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and endangering their own soul.

We are apt to be so sensitive about the way in which our friends treat us. So often we take offence at the slightest mark of inattention. We exact that others should have every consideration for our feelings, and any negligence on this point wounds us keenly. We nourish our wounded feelings, without realising that they are simply a form of pride. It hurts our vanity to think that our merits and our services are not fully appreciated. We are so prone to take offence, to refuse to listen to an explanation, and from coldness we pass to dislike, and even refuse to speak with those we once called friends. Evidently in this case

humility is the real remedy. When we think how Christ was treated by His disciples it should help us to bear with the real or seeming indifference of those we love. Sometimes we have to complain of positive ingratitude and insult from those to whom we have rendered service. We may expect it in this world, for the disciple cannot hope to be better treated than the Master ; and thus prepared and fortified by the example of our Saviour, we shall learn *to despise* our wounded feelings and *to rise above* them for Christ's sake. A few moments' meditation on the meekness of our Saviour and the treatment He received, together with a fervent prayer and generous effort, should be sufficient to enable us to conquer our touchiness, to love others in spite of their ingratitude, and to render service to our neighbour for God's sake, looking to Him alone for our reward.

Jesus is the model of all virtues, and charity is so often such a difficult lesson for us to master. Hourly we have need to look at the Divine pattern set before us ; but the prize is worth striving for, since charity is the distinctive mark of Christ's disciples, and how could we practise it effectually if opportunities were missing ? As our Saviour showed His Divine love in bearing with the ingratitude and sins of His disciples, so we can manifest our charity by supporting those who wound us by their forgetfulness or malice. The thought that it is for Christ's sake, and that we are rendered thereby more like our Divine model, should spur us on to be generous, and to forgive as we hope to be forgiven.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent to yourself our Lord standing before Pilate. Listen to the cries of the multitude, “*Crucify Him, crucify Him*”; and then consider how many of these had been healed, fed, or comforted by our Lord.

2nd Prelude.—Ask that you may never wound our Lord by your indifference or ingratitude.

1st Point.—Jesus healed all. Think of the numbers whom He had restored to health; of the thousands whom He had fed in the desert; of those to whom He had restored the use of their limbs or senses. These turned against Him during His Passion.

2nd Point.—Jesus gave the seventy-two disciples power to work miracles. There were holy women who ministered to Him and had seen many miracles. One hundred and twenty disciples saw our Lord ascend to heaven. Where were these during the Passion? How few came forward then!

3rd Point.—The Apostles were more privileged than the multitude or the disciples. Yet Judas betrayed our Lord, Peter denied Him, while all forsook Him and fled except St. John, who had the courage to stand by the Cross.

Colloquy.—Ask pardon for having so often grieved our dear Lord by cowardice or indifference. Ask for grace to profess the faith, and that your life in future may be a reparation for the past.

Resolution.—Be generous in sacrificing to God whatever He asks; try to console Him by your fervour for the negligence of others, or conquer your touchiness for the love of God.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“*They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.*”

Prayer.—Soul of Christ.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JOYS OF JESUS.

WE are familiar with the prayer, "By Thy joys, Jesus, deliver us," but have we ever stopped to think in what those joys consist, or how it came to pass that the Incarnate Word deigns to have joys and sorrows? Since He took our human nature and was perfect man, it was necessary that He should experience both, for of every human being it can be truly said that he "*knoweth the bitterness of his own soul; in his joy a stranger shall not intermeddle.*" We all need to rejoice, and the soul that rests enveloped in a mantle of melancholy, is a sad specimen of humanity, and further, is exposed to commit far more sins than the man who looks on the brighter side of life. Hope leads further than fear, and the expectation of glory will lead to heroic deeds, which threats could never have inspired. Even Jesus, our elder Brother, considered the reward, and was urged on to suffer; for the Apostle St. Paul bids us "*run by patience to the fight proposed to us: looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame; and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God.*" It is a consolation to feel that our Emmanuel was so truly human, that like us, He was encour-

aged by the joy to come, and it will be instructive to meditate awhile, on some of the sources of His rejoicing. The text quoted above gives us some of these sources : our Saviour "*endured the Cross,*" "*having joy set before Him.*" That joy was twofold. First there was the happiness of glorifying His Heavenly Father, of honouring the infinite perfection of God, so often outraged by man ; and Christ looked forward to the time when, having satisfied for our sins, He should enter in triumph into the glory of His Father. God was duly worshipped, when the Incarnate Word prostrated Himself before the throne of His Heavenly Father, and offered up His Divine adorations. God's justice was satisfied when the Lamb of God sacrificed Himself for us. Henceforth mercy could take the sceptre, for Jesus had taken on Himself "*the iniquities of us all.*" This thought filled our Lord with the deepest joy, it upheld Him in the conflict, and enabled Him to despise the shame. The glory of God was the mainspring of the life of Christ. When the end drew near He could say to His Father : "*I have glorified Thee on earth ; I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do.*"

Another source of joy that animated our Saviour was the thought, that through His merits we could enter heaven. May we not feel assured that under the humble roof at Nazareth, where He toiled as an artisan, in the labours and fatigues of His public life, and during the bitter hours of His Passion, the thought of the souls whose ransom He was paying, strengthened and encouraged Him ? In Gethse-

man an angel was sent to comfort and sustain Him, and may we not believe that the heavenly messenger presented to our Saviour in His agony these all-powerful motives? To glorify God and save souls—these incentives were ever before our Redeemer, and they made Him long for the hour when He could utter the “*Consummatum est.*” Truly, love works miracles, and what must have been the force of that Divine charity which sustained our Saviour throughout the whole of His mortal life and during the three hours’ agony on the Cross?

Constantly, Jesus reveals in parables how He rejoices over the salvation of souls. Now He represents the owner of the sheep, saying, “*Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost*”; and in these words the Good Shepherd expresses His own feelings. Another time He teaches the same lesson by the example of the father of the prodigal: “*It was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again, he was lost and is found.*” Again we are told: “*The angels of God rejoice over one sinner that does penance.*” If the guardians of mankind rejoice, how much more shall our Redeemer be glad, seeing that for them He shed His Precious Blood? He ever pities the sheep who are scattered far from the fold, deprived of a shepherd’s care. The sight of a field of golden corn ready for the sickle, reminds Him of the souls who are only waiting to be taught the truths of Christianity, and who would embrace them so eagerly, had they the opportunity.

Never for one instant did the Redeemer lose sight of these two aims of His life, to glorify God and to effect our redemption. Jesus was emphatically "*The Man of Sorrows*," hence sorrow is the dominant note in His life ; yet there were times when He manifested His joy and deigned to reveal its source to His disciples.

In the discourse after the Last Supper, He gave them His instructions before He suffered : "*Abide in Me and I in you.*" "*In this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit.*" Then He goes on to give us the motive for recommending these points : "*These things have I spoken that My joy may be in you.*" Clearly two means of rejoicing the Sacred Heart of Jesus are here pointed out to the Apostles. The first is our union with Him, which is effected by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the soul. Our Saviour loves to be united to His own, and that this union might be abiding, He worked a miracle in instituting the Blessed Eucharist, which is pre-eminently the sacrament of union. So necessary is this intercourse between God and the soul that our Lord urges us constantly to abide in Him. He warns us, "*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you.*" This union is expressed under the beautiful metaphor of the vine and its branches, in which we also see the evils that result when the soul is separated from God, its origin and its end.

Christ tells us : "*I am the true Vine.*" "*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in*

Me." "*Without Me you can do nothing.*" "*If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither.*" How strange that the Creator and Redeemer should deign to unite Himself to the soul of man, that He should find His delight there, and even go so far as to plead for readmittance, when the sinner has dethroned Him by mortal sin.

As we meditate on this marvellous mystery, surely the thought must come home to each one of us, How far do I strive to accomplish our Lord's desire? Am I conscious of having offended God grievously? Do I endeavour to make fervent Communion, or am I one of those who refuse admittance to our Emmanuel when He stands at the door and knocks? Whatever the past may have been, the present is ours; there is still time to correspond to our Saviour's infinite love and to give Him the joy of taking possession of our soul once more. What will be the fruits of this Divine union? Our Lord tells us, "*He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.*" We know how the gardener rejoices when the seed which he has sown, or the tree which he has planted, bears fruit. The expectation of a rich harvest is the motive which urged him to spend so much money and labour on his garden. As he contemplates an orchard laden with fruit, he feels himself amply repaid for all his toil. On the other hand, what a bitter disappointment it is when the harvest is blighted or when the trees produce only leaves.

Our Saviour toiled for thirty-three years on

earth, and shed His Precious Blood to pay our ransom, but His sufferings are only efficacious in so far as we apply them to ourselves by sincere contrition, and by bringing forth fruits of true repentance. Our good works performed for the love of God are the fruit in which Christ rejoices. All Christians will be judged by their work as well as by their faith; and these good deeds are not merely optional, as some would have us believe, but are of strict obligation. Higher still than the thought of our own interests as a motive for doing good works, comes the remembrance that they rejoice the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This is true of each action performed with a pure intention by the Christian who is in a state of grace.

How constantly it is in our power to give such joys to Christ. A prayer piously said, a sharp reply withheld, a kind word spoken, some little service rendered, are good works within the power of all. Yet each act is meritorious for heaven and pleasing to God. On one occasion, we are told in Holy Scripture that our Lord rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said, "*I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to little ones.*" These words show us another source of Christ's joy, namely, the interior illumination by which God reveals Himself to the soul. Our natural faculties are unable to grasp the supernatural, since it does not fall under the senses. Whatever concerns God and the next world must be revealed from above.

Throughout our whole life we are bound to

progress in the knowledge and love of God, if we would not go back. We cannot remain stationary, or the currents of this world will draw us along with them. Our aim should be to imitate the Divine model, but we cannot do this unless we learn to know Him better, for growth in the spiritual life is the result of a deeper knowledge of the truths which God has revealed. Just as the sap in the tree must bear fruit, so the deeper spiritual life shows itself by actions. The saints who penetrated so far into the mysteries of the interior life, were those who brought forth a hundredfold. On the other hand, what blighted ears of corn are sometimes offered to the Lord of the harvest, to say nothing of the seed that is either quite sterile or devoured by the birds of the air. Surely, one saint must glorify our Heavenly Father more than many careless, lukewarm Christians.

The thought that our progress in holiness gives glory to God and rejoices our Divine Saviour should be a powerful motive to urge us to fervour. At the best, our copies will be very faulty, infinitely far from the Divine model ; but at least they can suggest the original, and though "rough hewn" by our feeble efforts, God can "shape the ends."

The Creator Spirit will ever guide and second our endeavours, and thus, little by little, the work of our sanctification will progress. Christ our Master rejoiced, and He willed that His disciples should serve Him with joy. The Catholic faith is no gloomy creed, with a stern code of morality, excluding all the sunshine from life. True, the

earth is a vale of tears, but a vale where the sun's rays penetrate to render those tears fertile. Sorrow after all, is transient—joy eternal. Since eternity is to be passed in the joys and glory of heaven, we do well to begin our apprenticeship on earth. What reasons have we for rejoicing? Above all, because our Lord *wills and commands it*. “*These things have I spoken unto you that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled.*” It is no scanty measure of joy that our Saviour would mete out to us. The Apostles re-echo the Divine precept: “*Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice.*” “*Rejoicing in hope.*” “*Always rejoice.*”

These are all general precepts, but we find in Scripture various special motives, why the followers of Christ should rejoice. Thus when our Lord had sent out His disciples on an apostolic mission we are told: “*The seventy-two returned with joy, saying: ‘Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy Name.’*” Jesus, however, gave them a better subject of joy, and He replied: “*Rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject unto you, but that your names are written in heaven.*”

All Christians in a state of grace have like cause for rejoicing, for each one who is united to Christ has his name written in the book of life. Nothing, except our own evil deeds, can efface that name; the devil has no power to blot it out. The thought that we belong to God, that He knows and loves each one individually, should help us to bear the burden and heat of the day. Our names are written in heaven; may we not say that they are engraved in the memory of God? Moreover, we

are told that our home is also prepared, in the realms of bliss, by our loving Saviour. To reach that blest abode, we must pass through great tribulation ; but this need not discourage us, when we remember that this is one of the conditions laid down by our Lord, for all who would save their souls.

Not only should we bear our trials *patiently* but even *joyfully*, the more so if in any way we suffer for our faith. We read : “ *Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.* ” A brave soldier is proud to be in the foremost of the fight, though the issue of the conflict is uncertain. Shall we be cowards and repine when called to face sorrow and privation, especially when we know that the victory is certain if only we persevere?

It is also a subject of joy that Christ asks our co-operation in the salvation of souls. He bids us pray that God may send labourers into the harvest field ; and He also wills that each, according to his position in life, should engage actively in works of zeal. “ *Go work in My vineyard* ” is a *universal* command. There is employment for all, and the laity can effectually help the clergy in bringing souls to God. Men can help in the boys’ clubs and various societies and guilds. An intelligent and well-read Catholic can use his pen in the service of religion. Women can assist the poor, nurse the sick, visit the hospitals and workhouses, instruct the ignorant, or work with their needle.

There is so much to be done and so few hands to do it.

For many, their corner of the vineyard is the home circle, and this presents a vast area when we remember, that *most of the saints had pious mothers*, and that a child learns so much at home, long before his school education begins. Unfortunately, the little corner we call "home" is so often neglected for exterior works which are good in themselves; that we have sometimes need to remember our Saviour's caution: "*These things you ought to have done and not leave those undone.*"

The essential point is, are we rejoicing the Sacred Heart of Jesus by our zeal for the salvation of others? What are we striving to do for God, and what more could we do? Or, perhaps, we have need rather to renew our zeal for those works which we are tempted to perform carelessly.

What constitutes the joy of the saints in heaven?

The greatest source, without doubt, is the beatific vision, to contemplate God, to see Him as He is, and ever to learn more of His infinite perfections. Our Blessed Lady, even on earth, realised something of this joy when, in her sublime canticle, she exclaimed: "*My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.*"

Constantly in Holy Scripture we are exhorted to be glad for this noble motive: "*Rejoice in the Lord alway.*" "*Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him.*" It is sometimes good to rise above the mists of earth, to forget self, and *to rejoice that our God is what He is*. Such a thought dwarfs our trials and enables us to go on our way rejoicing;

assured that, though “*In the evening weeping shall have place,*” yet “*in the morning gladness comes,*” and that morn is eternal.

Only to sit and think of God,
O what a joy it is !
To think the thought, to breathe the Name,
Earth has no higher bliss !

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION.

Preparatory Prayer.—Page 5.

1st Prelude.—Represent the seventy-two disciples standing round our Lord on their return from their mission. Contemplate our Lord in spirit, as “*In that same hour He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost.*”

2nd Prelude.—Ask for grace to honour our Saviour by living in the spirit of joy

1st Point.—Our Lord’s joy was twofold. He rejoiced to glorify His Father and to atone for our sins.

2nd Point.—Christians can give joy to our Lord by :—

- (a) Their union with Him.
- (b) Their good works.
- (c) Their progress in holiness.

3rd Point.—We should rejoice because :—

- (a) Our names are written in heaven.
- (b) We can suffer and work for God.
- (c) He is all-perfect.

Colloquy.—Ask that you may glorify God by serving Him joyfully ; pray for strength to rejoice

even in tribulation. Thank God for all the reasons which you have for rejoicing.

Resolution.—Live above self, and do not suffer contradictions to rob you of spiritual joy.

Offering of Resolutions.—Page 6.

Spiritual Bouquet.—“By Thy joys, Jesus, deliver us.”

Prayers.—Magnificat, Glory be to the Father.

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CECILIA, MADAME

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